NATION

Hotel owner, manager held after fire kills 14 in Polka

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Markets add 2.1 cr new investors in FY26: NSE

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SPORTS

GT eye quick rebound post Suryavanshi blitz

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 2 MAY 2025 | FRIDAY | BENGALURU |3 DHU AL-QIDAH, 1446 AH | Vol 4 | Issue No 118 | Pages: 8

ATF price cut by 4%, commercial LPG rates reduced

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The price of Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) was reduced by 4.4 per cent on Thursday marking the second major cut within a month. Additionally, the price of commercial LPG used in hotels and restaurants was lowered by Rs 14.50 per cylinder which now costs Rs 1,747.50 in the national capital and Rs 1,699 in Mumbai. The reduction follows a Rs 41 per cylinder cut in rates effected on April 1. The ATF price was reduced by Rs 3,954.38 per kl to Rs 85,486.80 per kl in the national capital - one of the busiest airports in the country, according to state-owned fuel retailers. *—PTI*

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ATM usage cost up by Rs 2 to Rs 23/withdrawal

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s instructions on revised charges on Automated Teller Machines (ATM) usage cost have come into effect from Thursday. Banks' charges per withdrawal have increased from Rs 21 to Rs 23 once a customer exhausts the free permissible limit in a month. Customers are eligible for five free transactions every month from their own bank (ATMs). They are also eligible for free from other bank ATMs -- three transactions in metro centres and five in non-metro centres. "Beyond the free transactions, a customer may be charged a maximum fee of Rs 23 per transaction. This shall be effective from May 01, 2025," circular issued by RBI in March said. *—PTI*

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YouTube to invest ₹850 cr to in Indian content creators

MUMBAI, 1 MAY

YouTube plans to invest over Rs 850 crore to accelerate the growth of Indian creators, artists, and media companies, its CEO Neal Mohan said on Thursday at a session on 'Powering the Creator Economy in India', at the inaugural day of the World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit (WAVES) here. He also said that last year content produced in India racked up 45 billion hours of watch time from viewers outside of the country while in the last three years alone, YouTube has paid more than Rs 21,000 crore to creators, artists, and media firms. *—PTI*

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Israel wildfires flare near Jerusalem for 2nd day

JERUSALEM, 1 MAY

Wildfires near Jerusalem raged for a second day on Thursday, with Israeli police reopening roads, including the main Tel Aviv–Jerusalem highway. Prime Minister Netanyahu said 18 people were arrested on suspicion of arson. Over 150 firefighting teams and 12 aircraft battled the blaze, aided by reinforcements from Italy, France, Spain, Romania, Croatia, Cyprus, and North Macedonia. Thousands were evacuated; 23 people were treated for smoke inhalation and burns, and 17 firefighters were injured. Authorities urged caution during Independence Day celebrations and warned the public to avoid parks and open flames amid dry, windy conditions. *—Agencies*

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ATTARI-WAGAH BORDER BETWEEN INDIA, PAK SHUT

Pak Army says it will retaliate to India's 'military misadventure'

Pakistani nationals wait at the Attari-Wagah border in Amritsar to return to Pakistan; Indian brothers accompany their sisters and their children, who hold Pakistani passports, as they cross into Pakistan on Thursday *PHOTOS: PTI*

NEW DELHI/ISLAMABAD, 1 MAY

The Attari-Wagah border between India and Pakistan was completely closed on Thursday amid escalating tensions following the 22 April Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26, mostly tourists. The Indian government had ordered all Pakistani nationals with short-term visas to leave the country, resulting in a heavy rush over the past week.

In total, 911 Pakistani nationals left India between 24 and 30 April. Of these, 125 departed on the final day via Attari-Wagah. Those with long-term, diplomatic, or official visas were exempted. During the same period, over 1,600 Indian nationals also returned from Pakistan. Additionally, 224 Pakistani nationals with long-term Indian visas entered India.

The Centre's 'Leave India' directive came with staggered deadlines based on visa categories, with most expiring by 29 April. Defence personnel from both nations were also withdrawn or expelled, worsening diplomatic strains. In parallel, Pakistan temporarily closed parts of its Karachi and Lahore airspace from 1 to 31 May. The Civil Aviation Authority stated the airspace would be restricted daily from 4:00 am to 8:00 am for "security reasons," though commercial operations would be rerouted.

Amid fears of Indian retaliation, Pakistan Army Chief Gen Asim Munir issued a strong warning, stating, "Any military misadventure by India will be met with a swift, resolute, and notch-up response." Speaking during a high-intensity field training exercise, he reaffirmed Pakistan's preparedness and commitment to national security. Pakistan also warned that the following 36 hours could be "critical." Meanwhile, Pakistani FM radio stations stopped airing Indian songs. Songs, especially from Lata Mangeshkar, Mohammed Rafi, Kishore Kumar, and Mukesh, are played by FM radio stations here daily.

In the wake of the Pahalgam attack, Police on Thursday carried out searches at 21 places in Srinagar as part of a clampdown on the terror ecosystem. *—PTI*

> **Har vyakti ko chun chun ke jawab bhi milega, jawab bhi diya jayega (Each person involved in the attack will be hunted down and punished)**
>
> —Amit Shah, Home Minister

PAHALGAM TERRORISTS STILL IN SOUTH KASHMIR: SOURCES

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Four heavily armed terrorists who killed 26 people in Pahalgam, South Kashmir, on 22 April remain at large despite an intense manhunt by Indian forces. Sources in the National Investigation Agency (NIA) believe they are still hiding in the dense forests of South Kashmir, surviving on pre-arranged supplies and using advanced communication equipment, including satellite phones and encrypted radios. The attackers had reportedly surveyed four other locations but chose Baisaran Valley due to a lack of security presence. *—Agencies*

DON'T DEMORALISE FORCES: SC RAPS PAHALGAM PETITIONER

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The Supreme Court on Thursday dismissed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) seeking a judicial inquiry into the 22 April terror attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, which left 26 people dead, mostly tourists. A bench comprising Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh sternly criticised the petitioners—advocates Fatesh Kumar Sahu, Vicky Kumar, and Kashmir resident Junaid Mohd—for seeking a retired judge to oversee the investigation.

The bench questioned the rationale behind involving retired judges in probes, stating, "Since when have retired judges become experts in investigations? They are meant to adjudicate, not investigate." The court warned that such petitions risk demoralising the security forces engaged in counter-terrorism efforts.

"You must understand the sensitivity of the matter. The entire nation is standing united against terror. Do not bring issues like this into the judicial domain," Justice Kant said, urging the petitioners to withdraw the plea.

The PIL had also requested minimum security protocols for tourist areas in conflict zones and guidelines for accurate media reporting. However, the court refused to entertain these prayers, making it clear that such policy matters fall within the remit of the executive, not the judiciary. *—PTI*

US SUPPORTS INDIA'S RIGHT TO DEFEND: HEGSETH TO RAJNATH

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The US on Thursday said it supports India's right right to defend itself and its fight against terrorism as American Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth dialled Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. This was amid rising tensions between India and Pakistan over the Pahalgam terror attack.

Singh told Hegseth that Pakistan has been "exposed" as a "rogue" state fuelling global terrorism, and "destabilising" the region. The world can no longer turn a "blind eye" to terrorism, the defence minister said during the conversation, according to an official readout. Pakistan's envoy to the US has urged President Donald Trump to help ease tensions with India as he simultaneously strives to solve conflicts in Europe and West Asia, Newsweek reported. *—PTI*

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Woman molested on Marathahalli road

- The woman has filed a complaint, and Marathahalli police are reviewing CCTVs.

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

A woman was allegedly molested by an unidentified man on a street in Marathahalli around 3am on Thursday, raising fresh concerns over women's safety in the City. According to police, the man approached the woman as she walked alone and touched her inappropriately before fleeing the scene.

The woman has filed a complaint, and Marathahalli police are reviewing CCTV footage from the area to identify and apprehend the suspect.

City Police Commissioner B Dayananda told **Salar News,** "We are taking every complaint seriously. Special teams have been formed to investigate harassment cases, and strict action will be taken against any officer found neglecting women's safety."

The incident comes weeks after a similar case in Suddaguntepalya on 3 April, when two female students were molested by a cab driver, Santosh D, outside a café. Though the victims did not file a complaint, a video recorded by a bystander went viral, prompting public outrage. Police tracked the accused across hundreds of CCTV cameras and arrested him in Kerala. *—Salar News*

WORKERS' RIGHTS MATTER

Trade Union members march from Town Hall to Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Thursday to mark World Labour Day (May Day), observed globally on 1 May to honour workers' rights and contributions *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

HC asks Ramdev to takedown sharbat jihad post

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The Delhi High Court on Thursday directed Yoga guru Ramdev to remove a video targeting Hamdard's Rooh Afza within 24 hours, warning him of contempt proceedings for his "sharbat jihad" remarks. Despite an earlier court order, Ramdev released new content allegedly disparaging Hamdard, prompting the court to say, "He is not in control of anyone. He lives in his own world." The court called the video prima facie contempt and demanded its removal from all platforms, with a compliance affidavit due in a week. Hamdard's counsel said the communal tone of the viral video, which had nearly 9 lakh views, was divisive. *—PTI*

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FAKE NEWS ON NEET

NTA reports 112 social media a/cs to MHA

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

In a crackdown on fake claims about the NEET-UG, the National Testing Agency (NTA) has identified 106 Telegram and 16 Instagram channels involved in spreading false information, sources said on Thursday.

The NTA's dedicated portal for receiving such concerns has flagged more than 1,500 claims of alleged paper leaks for the upcoming medical entrance exam.

In a decisive move to protect the integrity of the NEET-UG 2025 examination process, the agency has initiated action against certain fraudulent Telegram and Instagram channels that claim to have access to the NEET-UG 2025 question paper.

"Acting on inputs received through its recently-launched Suspicious Claims Reporting Portal, the NTA has identified 106 Telegram and 16 Instagram channels engaged in spreading misinformation and attempting to mislead students," a source said.

"These cases have been formally escalated to the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) under the Ministry of Home Affairs for further legal and investigative action," the source added.

The NTA has requested Telegram and Instagram to immediately take down these channels to prevent the spread of falsehood and unnecessary panic among the aspirants.

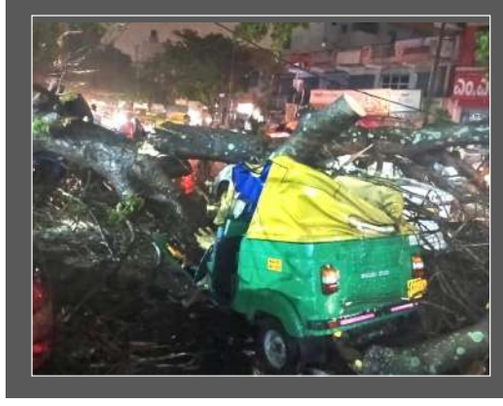
"Telegram and Instagram have been urged to share the details of the administrators and creators of these groups with law-enforcement agencies for prompt investigation and prosecution," the source said.

The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate) is scheduled to be held on 4 May.

The ministry is implementing a comprehensive plan in view of last year's alleged irregularities, including paper leaks, which raised concerns about the integrity of the exam. *—PTI*

- The NTA has requested Telegram and Instagram to immediately take down these channels to prevent the spread of falsehood and unnecessary panic among the aspirants.

RAIN DISASTER



An auto driver, Mahesh, died when a tree fell on his vehicle due to heavy rain and strong winds in Kathriguppe, Bengaluru, on Thursday evening. Another car was also damaged. *PIC: SALAR*

UKRAINE SIGNS MINERAL DEAL WITH US

WASHINGTON, 1 MAY

The US and Ukraine have signed an agreement granting American access to Ukraine's vast mineral resources, finalising a deal that could enable continued military aid to Kyiv amid concerns that US might scale back support in the ongoing peace negotiations with Russia.

The Ukrainian Parliament has to ratify the deal, called the United States-Ukraine Reinvestment Fund before it takes effect. *—PTI*

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PHOTO: ANI

Tejinder Singh assumes command of IAF training

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

Air Marshal Tejinder Singh on Thursday assumed command of Training Command of Indian Air Force. On taking over, he inspected a ceremonial guard of honour at headquarters training command and paid homage at the war memorial there, the Defence PRO office said in a post on X. Singh has over 4,500 hours of flying. He has commanded a fighter squadron, a radar station, a major fighter base and was Air Officer Commanding, Jammu & Kashmir. He has held important appointments of Assistant Chief of Air Staff Ops, Assistant Chief of Air Staff Ops and Senior Air Staff Officer, Eastern Air Command. —*PTI*

Helmetless riding costs City man his life

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

A man has died in a road accident in the City after his scooter collided head on with another two-wheeler coming from the opposite direction. The deceased David Sengol, 32, hailed from Tamil Nadu's Dindigul district. He worked at a laundry and stayed in a paying guest accommodation in Mathikere. Sengol had been returning from his work at around 10.15pm on 30 April when the accident occurred near the rear entrance of MS Ramaiah Hospital. Sengol, who was not wearing a helmet, sustained severe head and multiple body injuries, while the other rider escaped with minor injuries. He was declared dead shortly after being admitted in a hospital. An investigation is underway. **Salar News** "This tragedy could have been prevented with a simple act of precaution," a senior officer from the Yeshwanthpur Traffic Police Station told **Salar News**. "A safety helmet would likely have saved the victim's life." —*Salar News*

Man electrocuted while rescuing dog in Chamarajanagar

CHAMARAJANAGAR, 1 MAY

A 38-year-old man died while trying to rescue his electrocuted pet dog in Jalahallihundi New Layout on Thursday. The victim, Chandrugowda, unknowingly touched his dog, which had come into contact with a live electric pole, and was fatally electrocuted. According to police, a snapped electric wire had fallen onto the iron pole outside his house. Chamundeshwari Electricity Supply Corporation (CESC) officials rushed to the spot, repaired the fault, and announced Rs 5 lakh compensation for the bereaved family. Chamarajanagar MLA C Puttarangashetty visited the site. A case has been registered by the Chamarajanagar Rural Police, and an investigation is underway. Both Chandrugowda and his pet died on the spot. —*Salar News*

BJP using caste census to win Bihar: CM

Kharge urges Centre to allocate funds, fix a time limit for the census

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday said the Centre decided to conduct caste census keeping Bihar assembly elections in mind.

The Centre's move was a result of the pressure built by the Congress, especially its former president Rahul Gandhi, who also sought to know the date when the enumeration process would start in the country.

"The hurry in which the BJP led Centre took the decision regarding caste census on 30 April made me believe that it was done in view of Bihar assembly elections," Siddaramaiah said.

Chief Minister insisted that the 50 per cent ceiling on reservation should be relaxed.

Reservation should be given to SC/ST, OBC and minorities after due analysis of their socio-economic and education status.The verdict mandating 50 per cent ceiling was given in 1992 in the Indra Sawhney case. The Supreme Court while hearing about the Mandal Commission introduced ceiling on reservation, he explained. State government cannot revise the ceiling on the reservation because it is the Centre's domain. It can only recommend.

Siddaramaiah said the social and educational survey recommendations in the State government's caste census report will be implemented.

The survey report prepared by the Backward Class Commission will be discussed in a State Cabinet meeting on 9 May.

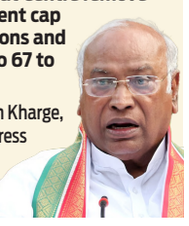
In a major decision, the Centre on 30 April announced that caste enumeration will be included in the forthcoming census exercise in a 'transparent' manner. —*PTI*

On Labour Day, government granted permanent employment to 12,692 pourakarmikas of BBMP in the City. The appointment letters were distributed by CM Siddaramaiah, DyCM DK Shivakumar, and AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge at an event in Palace Grounds. CM said 9,000 more workers, including drivers and helpers, would be regularised soon

PHOTO: Mohammed Asad

> **Centre has agreed to conduct the caste census only due to persistent pressure from Rahul Gandhi. Rahul has said that the caste census must be time bound. The Centre must set a deadline to finish this activity**
>
> -DK Shivakumar, Deputy Chief Minister

> **I demand that Centre remove the 50 per cent cap on reservations and increase it to 67 to 68 per cent**
>
> -Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress President



3 cops fired due to delay in M'luru lynching probe

MANGALURU, 1 MAY

Three police personnel have been suspended for alleged delay in investigating the mob lynching of Ashraf, a 38-year-old daily wage labourer from Kerala, who was beaten to death on 27 April near Bhatra Kallurti temple in Kudupu village, on the outskirts of Mangaluru.

Inspector Shivakumar, Head Constable Chandra P, and Constable Ellalinga of the Mangaluru Rural Police were suspended on Tuesday night, following public outrage and political pressure.

Ashraf, a resident of Wayanad, was allegedly attacked by a mob of 25–30 people after being accused of shouting "Pakistan Zindabad" while crossing a cricket ground. However, locals and reports suggest he was mentally unwell and was attacked after drinking water from a group nearby. Eyewitnesses claim he was beaten with bats and wooden sticks. Despite intervention attempts, he succumbed to his injuries.

Anupam Agrawal ***PHOTO: ANI***

Police have arrested 20 individuals so far. Ravindra Nayak, husband of former BJP corporator Sangeetha Nayak, is also being investigated for allegedly forcing bystanders to delete videos of the assault.

Maktoob Media reported that the attackers were affiliated with RSS and Bajrang Dal. The post-mortem confirmed Ashraf died from internal bleeding and shock due to blunt force trauma. Lack of timely medical aid contributed to his death, and his body was reportedly left unattended for two hours.

Senior Congress leader B. Ramanatha Rai has demanded the formation of a Special Investigation Team, citing recurring lynchings and rising communal tension in Dakshina Kannada. He said both communities distrust police investigations and urged swift, impartial action.

Police Commissioner Anupam Agrawal said they are investigating all angles, including the role of Nayak.

—*Salar News with Agencies*

Legislative Assembly Speaker UT Khader ***PHOTO: SALAR***

UT Khader says he has received death threats

BIDAR, 1 MAY

Legislative Assembly Speaker UT Khader revealed receiving death threats from multiple sources, including the underworld. Addressing reporters in Bidar on Thursday, Khader responded to Anupama Shenoy's claim that he was threatened by the Popular Front of India (PFI), stating, "There's no need to set up an NIA office in Mangaluru for my sake. If it benefits the public, let it be done."

Remaining resolute, Khader said, "Where one is born and where one dies is written by God. I pray for a peaceful death — all is in God's hands."

Condemning the recent terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir, Khader called for swift and strict action. "The central government must act against those behind the attack. Justice must be ensured for the victims and the nation," he said, stressing that terrorism aims to disrupt national harmony and weaken secularism.

On the issue of caste census, Khader maintained neutrality, stating, "It is a matter for the Centre and State. As Speaker, I remain neutral to both ruling and opposition parties. My role restricts public commentary."

Khader's remarks underscore the need for strong governance and national unity amid threats to public safety and democratic values. —*Salar News*

Traffic diversion near Devarabeesanahalli from 2 May

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

In an effort to ease congestion near Devarabeesanahalli Junction, the Bengaluru Traffic Police have announced temporary traffic diversions from 2 May to 8 May.

As part of the revised traffic plan, entry for vehicles from Sakra Hospital Road towards Devarabeesanahalli Junction will be restricted during this period.

Motorists heading to Devarabeesanahalli Junction from Sakra Hospital Road are advised to take an alternate route via Sakra Hospital Main Road, proceed to Bellandur Kodi, continue on Bellandur Main Road, reach the Outer Ring Road (ORR), and then head towards the junction.

Similarly, those travelling from Sakra Hospital Road towards Kadubeesanahalli Junction should use the Sakra Hospital Road to reach the ORR, turn left near the Ganesh Temple, and continue to Kadubeesanahalli Junction.

From there, they should take a U-turn, use the service road along the ORR, pass Cessna Business Park, and proceed to Devarabeesanahalli Junction. —*Salar News*

40T of Anna Bhagya rice for M'rashtra seized

BELAGAVI, 1 MAY

Authorities from the Department of Food and Civil Supplies seized 40 tonnes of rice intended for public distribution under the State government's Annabhagya scheme in Vijayapura late Tuesday night.

Vijayapura district manager, Amaresh Tandur, confirmed on Thursday that the department's enforcement squad, acting on a tip-off, intercepted a lorry on National Highway 50 on the outskirts of Vijayapura.

The rice was confirmed to be meant for ration card holders under the State-run Anna Bhagya scheme.

Upon interception, the driver and conductor fled the scene, abandoning the vehicle. The seized lorry has since been handed over to Jalanagar Police.

The rice, originating from a government godown in Bagalkot, was being illegally transported in a Tamil Nadu-registered lorry to Maharashtra via Vijayapura.

The consignment was intended for ration card holders in Bagalkot, Koppal, Davangere, Shivamogga, and Sagar.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, civil supplies officials told **Salar News** that large quantities of foodgrains meant for public distribution are being smuggled daily to neighbouring states, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu, from Vijayapura and Belagavi. —*Salar News*

The overnight downpour overwhelmed stormwater drains, causing them to overflow and flood roads, catching residents off guard

PHOTO: X/@TeamMysuru

Heavy rains lash Mysuru, damage trees & crops

MYSURU, 1 MAY

Heavy rainfall that lashed Mysuru on Wednesday night and early Thursday morning left several parts of the city inundated and caused widespread disruption. Numerous low-lying areas were waterlogged, and power outages were reported as strong winds uprooted trees and damaged electric poles.

Over 250 incidents of tree branch falls were reported across the city.

A tree and an electric pole fell onto a house compound near Priyadarshini Hospital in Brindavan Layout, cutting off power supply. Residents expressed anger at city corporation officials for not acting despite repeated complaints about the dangerous tree.

Branches also fell along the Kukkarahalli Lake bund, a popular local spot.

The overnight downpour overwhelmed stormwater drains, causing them to overflow and flood roads, catching residents off guard.

Mysuru City Corporation Superintending Engineer Sindhu stated that from the past three days of rain, the corporation had received reports of 53 uprooted trees and 543 fallen branches across all nine city zones. All have been cleared, and pruning operations are underway.

In rural parts of the district, strong winds and rain from 8pm on Wednesday caused coconut trees to fall and damaged crops like banana and maize in T Narasipura, HD Kote, Hunsur, Periyapatna, Saragur and KR Nagar taluks.

District Horticulture Officer Dr Manjunatha Angadi said assistant directors have been directed to submit reports on crop damage, including banana and coconut plantations, by Saturday. —*Salar News*

2 DEAD, 3 HURT IN CITY LPG CYLINDER EXPLOSION

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

Two people died, and three others were critically injured in an LPG cylinder explosion early Thursday morning in Adakamaranahalli, near Nelamangala.

Nagraj, 50, was living with his wife Lakshmidevi, 35, and their sons Basanagowda, 19, and Abhishek Gowda, 18, in the house for the past two years. According to the police, Nagraj had lit an oil lamp for morning prayers before leaving for work. Meanwhile, his younger son Abhishek attempted to change an empty gas cylinder in the kitchen. The regulator was reportedly not fitted properly, causing a gas leak that went unnoticed. Within minutes, the gas ignited, setting off a fire that completely destroyed the house. Nagraj, trapped inside, died unable to escape. Srinivas, 50, a neighbour who rushed to help, also died in the fire. —*Salar News*

The regulator was reportedly not fitted properly, causing a gas leak that went unnoticed

PHOTO: SALAR

8,96,447 students from 15,881 schools had registered for SSLC exam ***PHOTO: SALAR***

SSLC exam results to be declared today

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

The Karnataka School Examination and Assessment Board (KSEAB) will announce the results of the SSLC (Class 10) Exam-1 for the year 2025 on 2 May.

Karnataka Minister for School Education, Madhu Bangarappa will formally declare the results at 11.30am. Students can access their results online from 12.30pm onwards through the official website — http://karresults.nic.in.

Over 8,96,447 students from 15,881 schools had registered for the SSLC examinations that were held from 21 March to 4 April. The board will release detailed instructions regarding the revaluation process and the schedule for supplementary exams. This year's results are being closely watched as they reflect the outcome of the new examination pattern implemented under KSEAB's revised academic framework. —*Salar News*

- Students can access their results online from 12.30pm onwards through the official website — http://karresults.nic.in. Over 8,96,447 students from 15,881 schools had registered for the SSLC examinations that were held from 21 March to 4 April.

THREATENED WITH DEATH

Cop alleges assault by fellow policemen

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

Head Constable Afroz Khan of Attibele Police Station alleged that he was assaulted by fellow policemen from Govindarajnagar and later denied the right to file a complaint.

The incident reportedly occurred on 27 April near the Attibele toll gate. According to Khan, a group of Govindarajnagar officers had stopped several vehicles near the toll. His son, Ali Azgar Khan, who had come on a bike to visit a nearby bakery, was allegedly blocked, questioned for vehicle documents, and then physically assaulted despite showing valid papers.

Upon receiving a call from his son, Khan rushed to the scene and questioned the officers about the alleged assault. The situation escalated when the officers, reportedly including Sub-Inspector Guruprasad, ASI Hanumagowda Patil, and constables Arjun Kamble, Prasanna, and Suresh, allegedly abused him, snatched his phone, and physically attacked him. Khan claims he was then forcibly taken away in a vehicle and threatened with death.

PHOTO: CHATGPT

CCTV footage of the incident has surfaced, but police have yet to take any action.

Khan alleges that his attempts to file a complaint were blocked by senior officials at Attibele Police Station, including Deputy Superintendent of Police Mohan Kumar and Inspector Raghav, who he claims refused to register the case.

When Salar News contacted the Attibele police, a senior officer denied Khan's allegations, stating that the complaint was not refused and that the matter is currently under discussion.

Khan has said he plans to meet City Police Commissioner B Dayananda to demand an internal probe into incident. —*Salar News*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Army, Air Force versions of Dhruv cleared for ops

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The government has cleared the resumption of operations of Army and Air Force versions of the Advanced Light Helicopter Dhruv, officials said on Thursday. The naval version of the chopper will remain grounded, they said. The entire fleet of over 330 Dhruv helicopters operated by the Army, Navy, the Air Force and the Coast Guard was grounded in early January following a crash of one of the choppers. A Dhruv helicopter of the Coast Guard crashed at the Porbandar airport runway in Gujarat on 5 January. Two pilots and a diver of the helicopter were killed in the incident. Dhruv is a twin engine, multi-role, multi-mission helicopter. *—PTI*

Maharashtra's 12 depts score 100% in 100-day check

MUMBAI, 1 MAY

Twelve of Maharashtra's 48 government departments have achieved a perfect score in their 100-day performance review, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis announced on Thursday. After taking office in December, Fadnavis introduced a 100-day programme with ambitious goals for each department. Sharing the results on X, he stated that 18 departments had accomplished over 80 pre cent of their targets, while 10 achieved between 60 per cent and 79 per cent. Eight departments performed below 60 per cent. The top-performing departments, with 100 per cent completion, include Water Resources, Home, Rural Development, Animal Husbandry, Ports, Higher and Technical Education, Labour, Textiles, Cultural Affairs, Mining, Dairy Development, and the Employment Guarantee Scheme. Fadnavis highlighted this as a step towards more accountable and result-driven governance in Maharashtra. *—PTI*

Free speech limited as Chancellor, says Mallika Sarabhai

THRISSUR, 1 MAY

Prominent dancer, activist, and Chancellor of Kerala Kalamandalam, Mallika Sarabhai, has voiced concerns over restrictions on her freedom of expression in her new academic role. In a revealing Facebook post on Wednesday, Sarabhai wrote about her experiences, "Today I got my first taste of what it means to be the Chancellor of a University. Restricted speech." Her comments emerge amidst ongoing protests by ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) workers in Thrissur, who are advocating for better wages and improved working conditions. She expressed solidarity with the workers, describing their plight as "ill-paid and used." She also noted a crowdfunding initiative led by esteemed writer and activist Sarah Joseph to support the ASHA workers. *—PTI*

Modi in Kerala for commissioning of Vizhinjam seaport

T'PURAM, 1 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to inaugurate two landmark projects in southern India, signalling a new era of infrastructure growth. On Friday, he will commission the Vizhinjam International Seaport, India's first dedicated transshipment and semi-automated deep-water port, developed by Adani Ports under a Rs 8,867 crore PPP model. Strategically located near global shipping lanes, Vizhinjam promises to reduce dependence on Colombo and boost India's maritime trade. The next day, Modi will relaunch the construction of Andhra's greenfield capital Amaravati Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's dream city. *—PTI*

CWC to discuss govt's caste census move, terror attack

Modi master of giving headline without deadline, says Congress

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Congress Working Committee (CWC) will meet on Friday evening to deliberate on the Centre's announcement of a caste census and the recent terror attack in Pahalgam, party leaders confirmed.

Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said the meeting, scheduled for 4 pm at the party's headquarters on 24 Akbar Road, will address the two major national issues. Sources said the CWC is expected to pass resolutions seeking concrete action against Pakistan for the April 22 Pahalgam attack, which claimed 26 lives, and press for timely implementation of the caste census.

Ramesh accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of using the caste census as a diversionary tactic, calling him the "master of giving a headline without a deadline." He questioned the government's intent and criticised the lack of a clear timeline, budget, and constitutional framework for conducting the census.

He pointed out that the Union Cabinet had approved the 2021 census with a budget of Rs 8,254 crore, yet it was never carried out. In contrast, only Rs 575 crore has been allocated in the 2025–26 budget for the census. "What kind of census are they planning for that amount?" Ramesh asked.

Ramesh also demanded that the 50% cap on reservations be removed through a constitutional amendment and urged the government to implement Article 15(5), which allows reservations in private educational institutions.

He recalled the 2011 socio-economic and caste census conducted under the UPA government, noting it was not published due to flaws and the onset of elections.

The Modi government, he said, had dismissed caste enumeration until now. "Their moral and political defeat is clear," Ramesh said, crediting the Congress's sustained campaign for forcing the government's U-turn.

He also criticised the PM and Home Minister for previously labelling caste census proponents as "urban Naxals", asking rhetorically if they now consider themselves part of that group.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has also called for a specific timeline, warning that the announcement could go the way of the women's reservation bill – passed but not implemented. *—PTI*

Congress supporters pour milk over a photograph of party leader Rahul Gandhi to celebrate the announcement of conducting a caste census, in Patna on Thursday PHOTO: PTI

VP emphasises importance of institutional limit

LUCKNOW, 1 MAY

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar highlighted the critical need for constitutional institutions to respect their defined limits to foster mutual respect and a thriving democracy. Speaking at the launch of Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel's memoir "Chunautiyan Mujhe Pasand Hain", he said conflicts among institutions could undermine democratic governance.

In light of recent challenges, including a terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Dhankhar asserted that national unity must prevail. "Nation first should always be our guiding principle," he remarked, cautioning that the gravest challenges often originate from internal sources.

He referenced the Supreme Court's recent response to the Waqf Amendment Bill, indicating that dangers stemming from within lack logical foundations and impede national development.

Emphasising the importance of institutional boundaries, Dhankhar stated, "It is our binding duty that all constitutional institutions respect each other." He clarified that each branch of government has a defined role, urging that the legislature and judiciary should refrain from overstepping their respective domains. Dhankhar acclaimed the importance of freedom of expression and debate but warned against the dangers of assuming absolute correctness. He reflected on the Emergency as a pivotal lesson in India's democratic journey, stating, "Its dark shadows still loom." *—PTI*

US approves $131M military sale

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The United States has approved a proposal to supply India with critical military hardware and logistical support worth USD 131 million, reflecting the growing strategic partnership between the two nations. The Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), part of the Pentagon, has certified the foreign military sale and formally notified the US Congress.

This proposed sale supports the Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness programme, an initiative aimed at strengthening India's capability to monitor maritime activity and respond to regional threats. The package includes Sea-Vision software, remote software tools, analytical support, and access to relevant documentation. The principal contractor will be Hawkeye 360, based in Herndon, Virginia.

According to a US government statement, the sale aligns with America's foreign policy and national security objectives by enhancing India's maritime surveillance and strategic posture. It also noted that India, as a major defence partner, plays a vital role in maintaining political stability and economic progress in South Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific region.

The US added that the proposed equipment would not disrupt the military balance in the region and that India would have no difficulty integrating the systems into its existing defence infrastructure. Indian officials have yet to comment on the announcement. *—PTI*

EC to soon get death data electronically

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced new measures to enhance the accuracy and efficiency of electoral rolls.

One key reform involves the electronic transmission of death registration data from the Registrar General of India to the ECI. This will allow Electoral Registration Officers to receive timely information about registered deaths and ensure that voters who have passed away are removed from the electoral rolls quickly. Booth Level Officers will then verify this information through field visits, eliminating the need for relatives to submit formal requests.

This is supported by the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960 and the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969.

The ECI is redesigning voter information slips to make them more user-friendly. The voter's serial and part numbers will now be displayed in larger fonts, making it easier for voters to locate their polling station and for election officials to find names in the electoral rolls. *—PTI*

Poster outside BJP's Lucknow office takes a dig at Akhilesh

LUCKNOW, 1 MAY

Political tensions escalated in Uttar Pradesh as the BJP put up a provocative poster outside its office, targeting Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav. The poster depicted Yadav alongside Lucknow University professor Madri Kakoti and Bhojpuri singer Neha Singh, claiming he aligns with "traitors" following their controversial remarks after the recent Pahalgam attack.

An FIR has been filed against both women for allegedly inciting violence. In response, Yadav called for political restraint, urging the BJP to ensure its members do not disrespect revered figures like BR Ambedkar, referencing a separate controversy involving a merged image of himself and Ambedkar. *—PTI*

The Samajwadi Party hit back at its rivals and suggested that the poster could be the work of the BJP PHOTO: X-@MrsGandhi

'GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR TALENT'

PM meets Adobe, YouTube chiefs at WAVES

MUMBAI, 1 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday met global CEOs and Indian business leaders at a high-profile roundtable during the World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit (WAVES) in Mumbai, underscoring India's growing influence in the global creative economy.

Attendees included Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen, YouTube CEO Neal Mohan, Instagram head Adam Mosseri, Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani, Dream11's Harsh Jain, Nazara's Nitish Mittersain, and InVideo's Sanket Shah.

Calling this the right time to "create in India, create for the world," Modi said the WAVES could serve as a global platform for talent, with India fast emerging as a hub for digital content, gaming, music, fashion and film. Inaugurating WAVES, the Prime Minister urged content creators to use technology not just for innovation but to foster sensitivity and compassion.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Bharat Pavilion during the WAVES 2025 in Mumbai on Thursday PHOTO: PTI

"Humans should not be turned into robots," he said, highlighting the role of storytelling, music and art in shaping a more empathetic society.

He also stressed the need to protect youth from divisive ideologies and reaffirmed government support through initiatives like Skill India, Startup support, and AVGC policies.

WHAT IS WAVES?

WAVES is a flagship summit launched by the Centre to promote innovation, collaboration, and trade in the Media & Entertainment sector. Held under the banner "Connecting Creators, Connecting Countries", the four-event at Mumbai's Jio Convention Centre brings together global industry leaders, policymakers and creators for discussions and networking.

- Attendees included Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen, YouTube CEO Neal Mohan, Instagram head Adam Mosseri, Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani, Dream11's Harsh Jain, Nazara's Nitish Mittersain and InVideo's Sanket Shah

The event features over 100 top exhibitors, including Netflix, Amazon, Google, Meta, Sony, Adobe, Tata, Reliance, Dharma Productions, and Yash Raj Films. According to Invest India, WAVES aims to help unlock a $50 billion market by 2029, driven by rapid growth in digital media and a tech-savvy, youthful population. *—PTI*

Prominent actors at the WAVES 2025 in Mumbai on Thursday PHOTO: X

MP launches film tourism policy at WAVES 2025

BHOPAL, 1 MAY

The Madhya Pradesh government is set to unveil its Film Tourism Policy 2025 at the World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES) 2025, which begins on Thursday in Mumbai. The initiative aims to position the state as a vibrant hub for creativity and cultural tourism. Alongside the policy, Madhya Pradesh will showcase a spectacular dance drama titled 'Amritasya Madhya Pradesh' and launch the AVGC-XR Policy 2025, targeting investments of Rs 2,000 crore and the creation of over 20,000 jobs. The 'Incredible Madhya Pradesh' Pavilion will provide an interactive experience of the state's attractions. This four-day summit, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeks to establish Madhya Pradesh as a leading destination for cultural tourism and creative industries. *—PTI*

PAHALGAM AFTERMATH

Rubio calls up EAM, Pak PM; urges to de-escalate tensions

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The US has urged India and Pakistan to de-escalate tensions following the Pahalgam terror attack, as US Secretary of State Marco Rubio held separate phone conversations with Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Rubio expressed his condolences for the 26 civilian lives lost in the "horrific" attack and reaffirmed the US's commitment to cooperating with India in the fight against terrorism. He also called for Pakistan's cooperation in investigating the attack.

Jaishankar, in response, emphasised that the perpetrators, backers, and planners of the attack must face justice. He also highlighted concerns about possible retaliation from India, given the suspected cross-border links to the attack. The Indian government has made it clear that it will take severe action against those responsible.

In a high-level meeting, Prime Minister Narendra Modi assured that India's armed forces have full operational freedom in deciding how to respond. *—PTI*

Marco Rubio PHOTO: ANI

Pak national dies of heart attack

AMRITSAR, 1 MAY

A 69-year-old Pakistani national, Abdul Waheed, died of cardiac arrest on Wednesday before his repatriation. He had lived in India for 17 years and was found with an expired visa. He was brought from Srinagar by Jammu and Kashmir Police. Meanwhile, 139 Pakistani nationals crossed border into Pakistan. *—PTI*

PAKISTAN VIOLATES LOC CEASEFIRE FOR 7TH STRAIGHT NIGHT

JAMMU, 1 MAY

Pakistani troops continued ceasefire violations along the Line of Control (LoC) for the seventh consecutive night, prompting proportionate retaliation from the Indian Army, officials said on Thursday.

The firing spanned sectors across Kupwara, Uri, Akhnoor, Poonch, Rajouri and Jammu districts. This follows the 22 April Pahalgam terror attack, after which India suspended the Indus Waters Treaty. Despite DGMO-level talks on Tuesday, tensions remain high. Since 24 April, Pakistan has also blocked airspace to Indian flights, closed the Wagah border, and warned that any diversion of water under the treaty would be treated as an act of war. *—PTI*

> **India's decision to close its airspace to Pakistan's airlines in the wake of the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack is expected to severely disrupt Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) operations, increasing flight times and costs.** -Sanjeev Kapoor, Air Marshal (Retd)

PHOTO: ANI

No tree felling near Taj Mahal without our nod, orders SC

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The Supreme Court on Thursday reaffirmed its 2015 order prohibiting tree felling within a 5-kilometre aerial radius of the Taj Mahal without its prior approval. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan ruled that any felling in this zone requires court permission, irrespective of the number of trees. Outside this area, permission must be obtained from the Divisional Forest Officer and Central Empowered Committee (CEC), under the UP Tree Preservation Act. Exceptions apply only in emergencies endangering human life. The court also sought a CEC report on additional protections for Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri, and dismissed a plea to ease rules for private landowners in the Taj Trapezium Zone. *—PTI*

Odisha govt officer alleges assault by BJD legislator

JAJPUR, 1 MAY

A government officer has lodged a police complaint, accusing BJD MLA Biswa Ranjan Mallick of slapping him and making a casteist slur against him. Mallick, the MLA from Bari, rejected the allegation levelled by Junior Revenue Assistant Amar Ranjan Nayak. Police said they have started an investigation into the allegations. In the complaint, the officer said the MLA called him to the Bari block office at 12.45pm on Monday. "When I reached, MLA Mallick was sitting there along with the chairman and vice chairman of the block and some of his supporters. The MLA enquired about a specific file and then slapped me, besides abusing me about my caste," he alleged. *—PTI*

SOP for bomb threats: HC notice to Delhi govt, cops

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The Delhi High Court on Thursday issued notices to the Delhi government and the police on a plea alleging failure in formulating a mechanism to handle emergency situations such as bomb threats in schools. Justice Anish Dayal called it a serious issue, saying that it required urgent attention of authorities – especially when hoax calls has become very common and troubled children, their parents and schools authorities. The plea claimed that authorities were in contempt of the court's 14 November 2024 order, which directed them to develop a comprehensive action plan with a detailed standard operating procedure (SOP) to address such concerns. The directions required the government agencies and police to develop the mechanism within eight weeks of the issuance. *—PTI*

Woman kills self after triple talaq over phone

GORAKHPUR, 1 MAY

A woman, who was allegedly facing continuous dowry harassment, died by suicide in Uttar Pradesh's Gorakhpur after her husband gave her "triple talaq" over phone on Monday evening, police said on Thursday. Saniya, whose husband lives in Maharashtra, had returned to her maternal home in Gorakhpur on Saturday, they said. Senior Superintendent of Police Gaurav Grover suspended Sub-Inspector Jay Prakash Singh for failing to act on an earlier complaint lodged by the victim's family, they said. According to police officials, Saniya's mother Asiya had approached the Chauri Chaura police station alleging dowry harassment by her in-laws, but Singh allegedly dismissed the complaint and refused to register a case. After confirming the police inaction, the SSP ordered a departmental probe. *—PTI*

Hotel owner, manager held after fire kills 14 in Kolkata

Mamata vows action against officials lax about fire safety

KOLKATA, 1 MAY

The owner and the manager of the central Kolkata hotel, where a devastating fire killed 14 people on Tuesday, were arrested on Thursday, police said. Akash Chawla, the owner of Rituraj Hotel, and manager Gaurav Kapoor were arrested in the morning, they said.

A suo motu case was registered at the Jorasanko police station under various sections of the BNS, including 105 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder), and the West Bengal Fire Services Act against them, they added.

Police said 12 of the 14 bodies recovered from the hotel were identified and their post-mortem examinations completed. These have been handed over to their families, the police said, adding that efforts were underway to ascertain the identities of the remaining two bodies.

Firefighters evacuate people from the building after a fire broke out inside a hotel at Mechua in Kolkata PHOTO: PTI

There were 88 guests in 42 rooms of the six-storey budget hotel, located in Mechhua in the congested Burrabazar area, when the fire broke out at 8.10 pm on Tuesday.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday visited the fire-ravaged hotel and announced that those responsible for the death of 14 people will not be spared. She was on her way back from Digha and said that special committees comprising police, administration and fire services department are being set up to monitor and identify establishments which are flouting fire safety norms.

"The teams will conduct surprise checks in the city as well as district towns. Those in the administration found guilty of oversight and handing out operational NOCs to buildings with inadequate fire safety will also come under the purview of punishment," she said.

Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari alleged that the fire brigade responded late to the emergency call. "The number of deaths would not have been so high had the rescue and relief work been done swiftly," he said after visiting the spot. *—PTI*

Shops damaged in fire at Dilli Haat on Wednesday night PHOTO: PTI

Police begin probe into Dilli Haat fire

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The Delhi Police has launched an investigation into a fire at Dilli Haat, a popular market in south Delhi's INA area, in which at least 30 shops were gutted. Police will examine CCTV footage from multiple areas to determine the cause of the fire on Wednesday night, an official said. No casualties were reported.

"We have launched a detailed investigation into the fire incident that took place at Dilli Haat. We have formed multiple teams," said a senior police officer.

The officer said police are also verifying the response time of the fire teams that rushed to the location.

Tourism Minister Kapil Mishra also rushed to the spot to take stock of the situation.

A fire broke out at Dilli Haat, gutting over 30 shops and destroying items worth several crore rupees. Thirteen fire tenders had to be deployed to control the fire. *—PTI*

Curfew in Manipur dist after violence, arson

IMPHAL, 1 MAY

Prohibitory orders were imposed in parts of Manipur's Tamenglong district after a clash between two Naga villages over a land dispute left at least 25 people, including 12 security personnel, injured, officials said on Thursday.

The incident took place on Wednesday evening when about 2,000 residents of Old Tamenglong village were marching to the deputy commissioner's and SP's offices to submit a memorandum over the land dispute, they said.

Residents of Dailong village allegedly hurled stones at the procession, triggering the clash. People of the nearby Duigailong village also joined in support of Dailong, they added.

During the violence, the inspection bungalow of the Public Works Department was set on fire, officials said. Police lobbed tear gas shells to control the situation. At least 25 people, including 12 security personnel, were injured in the violence, they said.

- During the violence, the inspection bungalow of the Public Works Department was set on fire. Police lobbed tear gas shells to control the situation. At least 25 people were injured

Restrictions under Section 163 of the BNSS were imposed in the district headquarters town and the bordering areas of Dailong, Duigailong, and Old Tamenglong. The restrictions will remain in place till further orders, said the notification.

The Naga community lives in Tamenglong, and the clash stemmed from a dispute between two villages over their boundary, an official in Imphal said. It has no connection with the ethnic clashes between Meiteis and Kukis, he said. *—PTI*

Court lets NIA to record Rana's voice samples

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

A Delhi court has granted the National Investigation Agency (NIA) permission to collect voice and handwriting samples from Tahawwur Hussain Rana, an accused in the 26/11 Mumbai attacks. The order was issued by Special NIA Judge Chander Jit Singh on 30 April, following a request from the agency. This development comes after Rana's custody was extended for an additional 12 days on 28 April.

Rana, who is closely linked to David Coleman Headley, the main conspirator behind the attacks, was extradited to India following a ruling by the US Supreme Court on 4 April, which dismissed his plea against extradition.

On 26 November, 2008, a group of 10 Pakistani terrorists carried out a series of coordinated attacks across Mumbai, targeting a railway station, two luxury hotels, and a Jewish centre. *—PTI*

'SHARBAT JIHAD'

Ramdev beyond control, lives in own world: HC

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The Delhi High Court on Thursday ordered Yoga guru Ramdev to remove within 24 hours an offensive video targeting Hamdard, manufacturers of Rooh Afza, from social media platforms after he was accused of contempt in a row over his controversial "sharbat jihad" remarks against the drink.

The judge said, "He (Ramdev) is not in control of anyone. He lives in his own world."

The court had previously ordered him not to issue any statement or share videos in future similar to those before it and relating to products of competitors including Hamdard.

On Thursday, however, Hamdard's counsel informed the court that Ramdev again published a video containing offensive content.

Ramdev's lawyer has assured the court that the objectionable content will be deleted within 24 PHOTO: X

Ramdev, as a result, was ordered to take down the offending portion of the video which referred to Hamdard and its products "within 24 hours from all social media platforms and other media".

"In view of the last order, this video and the affidavit you have filed are prima facie in contempt. I will issue a contempt notice now. We are just calling him here," Justice Amit Bansal said.

After the court warned of initiating contempt action against Ramdev, his lawyer assured the objectionable content will be deleted from the video within 24 hours from YouTube, other social media platforms and any other media where it was published either by him or his company.

The court asked Ramdev to file an affidavit of compliance of its order within a week and posted the matter on 2 May. *—PTI*

Trio rapes woman in front of husband in Patna, two arrested

PATNA, 1 MAY

In a distressing incident on the outskirts of Patna, a dancer was reportedly raped in front of her husband in Shahpur Dera village, police confirmed on Thursday. The couple was returning home in the early hours of Wednesday after an event when the attack occurred.

As they sought directions to Dighwara railway station, three passersby offered assistance and requested the couple to ride with them on their motorcycles. However, rather than taking them to their intended destination, the individuals led them to a secluded area, where the woman was assaulted while her husband was restrained.

Following the incident, the assailants fled the scene, leaving the couple behind. Deputy Superintendent of Police (Danapur) Bhanu Pratap Singh stated that authorities swiftly acted on the victim's report, which led to the arrest of two suspects, Manoj Kumar and Manish Kumar, on Wednesday night. Efforts are ongoing to apprehend a third suspect, identified as Nagendra Kumar. The police are committed to ensuring justice for the victim. *—PTI*

CHAR DHAM YATRA

The idol of Lord Shiva arrives Kedarnath Dham from Ukhimath in a flower-decked palanquin on Thursday. The portals of Kedarnath Dham will reopen at 7am on Friday, adorned with about 11 tonnes of flowers from across India and abroad. Over 150 volunteers decorated the temple with 54 flower varieties, including roses and marigolds. A grand *aarti* at the confluence of Mandakini and Saraswati rivers will be a new attraction. PHOTO: PTI

COMMUNAL TENSION IN NAINITAL AFTER MINOR RAPED

NAINITAL, 1 MAY

Communal tensions flared in Nainital, after a 12-year-old girl was allegedly sexually assaulted by a 60-year-old man, leading to protests and incidents of vandalism, officials reported.

The accused, identified as Osman, a contractor, has been arrested, prompting authorities to increase police presence to maintain order. Protests began after news circulated that the girl was taken for a medical examination on Wednesday night following the alleged assault.

Various Hindu groups demonstrated outside the police station, with protesters demanding decisive action against the accused. Tensions escalated as shops owned by individuals from the Muslim community were vandalised, and stones were thrown at a nearby mosque. The crowd, chanting slogans against Pakistan, also damaged vehicles and broke windows in local homes. *—PTI*

5 AGENCIES BATTLE TOGETHER

In 9-day operation, security forces recapture hill occupied by Maoists

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

In a major breakthrough, security forces have reclaimed the strategic Karregutta hill, a former Maoist stronghold situated along the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border. Standing at an altitude of 5,000 feet and located in dense forest terrain, the hill had long served as a hideout for top Maoist leaders including Hidma, Deva, Damodar, Azad, and Sujata.

The operation, one of the largest anti-Naxal missions in India, was launched on 21 April and spanned nine days. Around 24,000 personnel from the District Reserve Guard, Bastar Fighters, Special Task Force, CRPF and elite CoBRA units participated, backed by drones and helicopters. Supplies were air-dropped due to the difficult terrain, covering roughly 800sq km across Bijapur (Chhattisgarh) and Mulugu (Telangana) districts.

Around 24,000 personnel, backed by drones and helicopters, took part in the operation PHOTO: ANI

The Karregutta and Durgamgutta hills had been used as a key base by the Maoists' strongest military unit—PLGA battalion No. 1—as well as members of the Telangana State Committee and the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai closely monitored the operation. *—PTI*

BBMB to release water to Haryana; Mann calls it 'robbery' of rights

CHANDIGARH, 1 MAY

The Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) has controversially decided to release 8,500 cusecs of water to Haryana, prompting strong backlash from Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, who condemned the move as a "robbery" of Punjab's rights.

The decision, reached during a lengthy five-hour meeting of the BBMB's technical committee, has incited tensions in the region, where Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan share water resources from the Bhakra, Pong, and Ranjit Sagar dams for irrigation and other purposes. Punjab officials vocally opposed the release, claiming Haryana had already exhausted its allocated share, especially given the current low water levels in the Pong and Ranjit Sagar reservoirs.

In response to the BBMB's decision, Mann expressed his outrage on social media, stating, "The entire Punjab strongly opposes the decision... We will not tolerate another robbery of our rights by the BJP at any cost." He accused the BJP-led central government of exerting pressure on Punjab through the BBMB to favour Haryana's water demands.

In recent declarations, Mann highlighted that Haryana had already utilised its full allocation by the end of March and insisted that Punjab requires water for the imminent paddy sowing season, with no surplus available. Previously, Punjab had generously provided 4,000 cusecs daily to Haryana since 6 April. *—PTI*

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Thursday said Haryana had already utilised its full allocation by the end of March and insisted that Punjab requires water for the imminent paddy sowing season PHOTO: X/ Bhagwant Mann

VICTORY PARADE

Russian military troops rehearse for the Victory Day military parade at the Dvortsovaya Palace Square in St Petersburg, Russia. Victory Day celebrated on 9 May, marks the end of the bloodiest wars in Russia when Germany surrendered to the Soviet Union in 1945 ***PHOTO: PTI***

Where does EU stand amid India-Pak tension?

As tensions between the nuclear powers India and Pakistan rise in the aftermath of an attack in Indian-administered Kashmir, analysts say it is largely trade that defines the European Union's (EU) relations with India.

The EU has called for military restraint and a dialogue between India and Pakistan as tensions rise in the Indian subcontinent over a recent attack in India–administered Kashmir, in which more than two dozen tourists were shot dead.

It was reported in the Indian media that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had authorized the Indian armed forces, "to decide on the mode, targets and timing" of India's response. Pakistan, meanwhile sounded the alarm that an Indian attack was imminent within 24 to 36 hours.

"The EU has consistently underlined the need for a peaceful solution to the situation rooted in dialogue and engagement. This is especially important in the aftermath of this terrorist attack," EU spokesperson Anouar El Anouni told DW at the daily press conference in Brussels.

"It is crucial to show restraint and refrain from military, political, economic, legal or other measures that could undermine regional stability," he said, adding that the EU hoped for channels of communication between the South Asian rivals to remain open.

On 22 April, gunmen dressed in military uniforms attacked tourists in the mountain resort of Pahalgam in Indian-administered Kashmir, at a popular scenic spot often described as a "mini-Switzerland." European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen posted her condolences on the social media platform X that same day.

A lesser known Kashmiri militant group calling itself the Kashmir Resistance Front (TRF) which came into being only in 2019, the year India revoked Indian-administered Kashmir's special status, first claimed responsibility for the attack, but later retracted this claim.

The EU has called for military restraint and a dialogue between India and Pakistan as tensions rise in the Indian subcontinent over a recent attack in India–administered Kashmir ***PHOTO: PTI***

The Indian government blames Pakistan. An unnamed official told the New York Times that the TRF was a proxy of the Pakistan-based militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba, which was also accused of carrying out an attack in the Indian city of Mumbai in 2008.

Dr. Claude Rakisits, a visiting fellow at the Center for Strategy, Defense and Security at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), told DW that none of the international actors had yet offered more than ceremonial diplomatic statements with regard to the escalation of tension, but that did not mean phones were not ringing in New Delhi and Islamabad.

However, he pointed out that the EU was not as big a player in the Indian subcontinent as the US and China, and at the moment was preoccupied with other issues, including thewar in Ukraine.

"The bottom line, as far as the EU is concerned, is that its priorities now lie in Ukraine, and Gaza," he said.

"Often the international community, not just the EU, can only cope with one or two issues at the same time."

Others said that as trans-Atlantic ties suffered under US President Donald Trump and a new world order began to take shape, India had suddenly acquired more significance in Brussels.

"The EU won't do anything," he told DW, explaining that business would take precedence.

"As the US turns against the EU, (leaders in the EU) have realized they need to diversify trade relations, and India, although a medium level power, is set to overtake Japan as an economy."

Chaudhuri illustrated his point by drawing attention to Von der Leyen's visit to India earlier this year and her announcement to finalize a long-pending free trade agreement by the end of 2025.

According to Rakisits, EU member states are also positioning themselves favorably to India to secure defense contracts.

However, Chaudhuri added that recent developlments in the EU's relations with India were partly due to shared experiences in confronting terrorism. He pointed out that in this case, India was the victim and still mourning its dead. Many EU leaders have condemned the attack.

French President Emmanuel Macron said France stood firmly with India and its people in this hour of grief. *— DW News*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Global CEOs' pay went up by 50%: Oxfam analysis

Noting that the average pay for CEOs in India has reached USD 2 million a year, a new study by research and advocacy group Oxfam said the average pay for global CEOs surged by 50 per cent in real terms since 2019, against a 0.9 per cent hike in average worker's wages.

Every hour, billionaires pocket more wealth than the average worker earns in an entire year, the analysis said, underlining that the average gender pay gap in 11,366 corporations worldwide narrowed slightly from 27 per cent to 22 per cent between 2022 and 2023 -- yet their average female employee still effectively works for free on Fridays, while their average male employee is paid through the week.

"This is a 50 per cent real-term increase from USD 2.9 million in 2019 (adjusted for inflation) -- a rise that far outpaces the real wage growth of the average worker, who saw a 0.9 per cent increase over the same five-year period in countries where CEO pay data is available," the analysis said.

Ireland and Germany have some of the highest-paid CEOs, earning an average of USD 6.7 million and USD 4.7 million a year in 2024, respectively.

The analysis said the average CEO's pay in South Africa was USD 1.6 million in 2024, while in India, it reached USD 2 million.

"Year after year, we see the same grotesque spectacle: CEO pay explodes while workers' wages barely budge. This isn't a glitch in the system -- it's the system working exactly as designed, funnelling wealth ever upwards while millions of working people struggle to afford rent, food and healthcare," Oxfam International executive director Amitabh Behar said.

The boosts to global CEO pay come as warnings grow that wages are failing to keep pace with the cost of living, the analysis said.

While the International Labour Organization (ILO) reported real wages grew by 2.7 per cent in 2024, many workers have seen their wages stagnate.

In France, South Africa and Spain, for example, real wage growth was just 0.6 per cent last year.

While wage inequality decreased globally, it remains very high, particularly in low-income countries, where the share of income of the richest 10 per cent is 3.4 times higher than the poorest 40 per cent.

The analysis said the billionaires -- who often fully, or in part, own large corporations -- pocketed on an average USD 206 billion in new wealth over the last year, which is equivalent to USD 23,500 an hour, more than the global average income in 2023 (USD 21,000).

Beyond the runaway CEO pay, the global working class is now facing a new threat: sweeping US tariffs.

These policies pose significant risks for workers worldwide, including job losses and rising costs for basic goods that would stoke extreme inequality everywhere.

"For so many workers worldwide, US President Donald Trump's reckless use of tariffs means a push from one cruel order to another: from the frying pan of destructive neoliberal trade policy to the fire of weaponised tariffs. These policies will not only hurt working families in the US, but especially harm workers trying to escape poverty in some of the world's poorest countries," Behar said.

Increasingly, corporations are being required by the law to report their gender pay gaps -- the average difference in earnings between women and men.

Oxfam's analysis of the S&P Capital IQ database found that among 11,366 corporations across 82 countries that reported gender pay gap data, the average gap narrowed slightly from 27 per cent to 22 per cent between 2022 and 2023.

Yet, on average, women in these corporations still effectively work without pay on Fridays, while their male counterparts are paid for the full week, the study said. *—PTI*

Every hour, billionaires pocket more wealth than the average worker earns in an entire year, the analysis said ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

May Day: Tokyo to LA, workers fight back against Trump's policies

Shouting "banzai!" or "live long," thousands of people gathered in a Tokyo park on Thursday and marched through the streets to the banging of traditional drums, as Japan kicked off celebrations to mark May Day.

The holiday, also known as International Workers' Day or Labour Day, marks the struggles and achievements of workers and the labour movement around the world.

Thousands of people are expected to attend rallies and marches across the US, including in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Philadelphia.

"For our children to be able to live with hope, the rights of workers must be recognised," said Junko Kuramochi, a member of a mothers' group who marched in Japan's capital.

US organisers say their message this year is focused on fighting back against President Donald Trump's policies targeting immigrants, federal workers and diversity initiatives.

Even in Japan, some said Trump's policies hung over the day like a shadow. One truck in the Tokyo march featured a doll that looked like Trump.

Tadashi Ito, a union construction worker in Japan, said he worried about the potential for rising prices of imported raw materials in the months ahead.

"Everybody is fighting over work and so the contracts tend to go where the wages are cheapest," he said.

"We think peace comes first. And we hope Trump will eradicate conflict and inequalities," Ito added.

In Indonesia, President Prabowo Subianto took to the streets of the capital, Jakarta, to greet thousands of workers who cheered him amid tight police and military security in National Monument Park.

"The government that I lead will work as hard as possible to eliminate poverty from Indonesia," Subianto told the crowd.

About 2,00,000 Indonesian workers were expected to take part in May Day marches across Southeast Asia's largest economy, according to Said Iqbal, president of the Confederation of Indonesian Trade Unions.

They are demanding an end to outsourcing rules, wage raises, and protection for domestic workers and migrant workers abroad, Iqbal said.

In Japan, crowds gathered from the northernmost main island of Hokkaido to the tropical island of Amami, and in major cities like Kyoto and Hiroshima.

Their demands were wide-ranging and included higher wages, gender equality, health care, reduced military spending and disaster relief for earthquake victims. They also demanded a ceasefire in Gaza and an end to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"Workers unite! Workers of the world! May Day!" they shouted, punctuating each exclamation with the word "banzai!"

Los Angeles is expected to host one of the world's largest May Day events this year, and a banner there summarised the day's theme: "One Struggle, One Fight – Workers Unite!"

"We're bringing the fight to the billionaires and politicians who are trying to divide us with fear and lies. We know the truth — an attack on immigrant workers is an attack on all workers," April Verrett, President of the Service Employees International Union, which represents 2 million workers, said in a statement. —PTI

US organisers say their message this year is focused on fighting back against President Donald Trump's policies targeting immigrants, federal workers and diversity initiatives ***PHOTO: PTI***

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Kuwait frees 10 more Americans

WASHINGTON, 1 MAY

Kuwait has released an additional 10 American detainees, bringing to nearly two dozen the total number freed by the country in the past two months. Kuwait's pardons of 23 Americans since March, done as a goodwill gesture, amounted to the largest release of US citizens by a foreign country in years. The prisoners include military contractors and veterans held on drug charges and other offenses, including one who was said to have been coerced into signing a false confession and enduring violence and threats against his wife and daughter. 10 others were released in March, weeks after a visit to Kuwait by Adam Boehler, the US envoy for hostage affairs. —*PTI*

NZ hit by destructive winds, heavy rain, snow

WELLINGTON, 1 MAY

Severe weather warnings in many parts of New Zealand on Thursday with heavy downpours prompted a state of emergency for Christchurch in South Island, while forecasters recorded "destructive" gales in Wellington. Heavy snow and large waves lashed other parts of the country. No deaths or serious injuries were reported. City residents were urged to stay indoors and keep away from doors and windows as gusts of up to 150 kph posed a threat from falling and flying objects. Flights were cancelled and passenger ferries were halted. Educational institutions remained closed. In some rural areas, heavy deluges caused rivers to spill over their banks, closing roads. Orange-level warnings were issued across parts of North and South islands.—*PTI*

Thousands rally for Burkina Faso's transitional head

DAKAR, 1 MAY

Thousands of people have rallied in Burkina Faso's capital Ouagadougou in support of its transitional president Ibrahim Traore after an alleged coup attempt and comments by US military's head in Africa, General Michael Langley criticising him. Last week, the West African country's military government foiled a "major plot" to overthrow Traore, with the army alleging the plotters were based in Ivory Coast. The US withdrew its military bases from Niger after Burkina Faso ended the military agreement between the two countries. Following a 2022 coup, Traore became Burkina Faso's transitional president with the promise to ushering in security and prosperity in the nation. Langley accused Traore of using Burkina Faso's gold reserves to benefit the junta. —*PTI*

3 cops killed while fighting terrorists in NW Pak

PESHAWAR, 1 MAY

Three police personnel of the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) were killed and two others injured in clashes with terrorists during an operation in northwest Pakistan, police said on Thursday. Two terrorists were also killed and others wounded in the clashes, but their accomplices managed to take them away, police said. According to police, a heavy contingent of Bannu and CTD Police cordoned off the area and launched a search operation, with raids being conducted on terrorist hideouts. Three CTD Police were killed when they encountered the terrorists in the Spin Tangi area, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, police said. The police have seized weapons, ammunition, IEDs, and hand grenades from the terrorists. —*PTI*

Russia strikes Ukraine amidst US deal

US to get access to Ukraine's mineral wealth and will fund its reconstruction

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Ukrainian First Deputy Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko sign a deal on Wednesday in Washington where US gets access to Ukrainian minerals and fund reconstruction **PHOTO: FB**

KYIV, 1 MAY

Russia continued to pound Ukraine killing at least 9 and injuring many, even as it signed a minerals deal with the United States that would ensure Washington's continued support to its sovereignty.

The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russia sent 170 exploding drones and decoys into five Ukrainian regions in the latest wave of attacks overnight into Thursday. The attack in the partially occupied Kherson region struck a market in the town of Oleshky, killed seven and wounded more than 20 people According to Ukraine officials, Russian drone attack on the Black Sea port city of Odesa early Thursday killed two people and injured 15 others while another struck a fuel station and ignited a fire in Kharkiv Ukraine's second-largest city.

> **This is truly an equal and good international deal on joint investment in the development and restoration of Ukraine between the governments of the United States and Ukraine**
>
> -Denys Shmyhal, Ukraine Prime Minister

The 'United States-Ukraine Reinvestment Fund' as they call it is expected to give the US access to Ukraine's valuable rare earth minerals while providing Kyiv a measure of assurance about continued American support in its grinding war with Russia. According to Ukraine Deputy Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal, the latest version of the deal would establish an equal partnership between the two countries and last for 10 years. Financial contributions to a joint fund would be made in cash, and only new US military aid would count toward the American share.

"This agreement signals clearly to Russia that the Trump administration is committed to a peace process centred on a free, sovereign, and prosperous Ukraine over the long term," Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a statement.

Trump said Wednesday night on 'NewsNation' that the deal, "in theory," means that the US will get more from Ukraine than it contributed. "I wanted to be protected," he said, adding that he didn't want to be looking "foolish" by not getting money back for the investment.

Russia has effectively rejected a US proposal for an immediate and full 30-day ceasefire imposing unreasonable conditions on Ukraine.

Meanwhile, North Korea and Russia have said they have begun building their first road link through the construction of a bridge over a border river that will further expand their booming ties. North Korea has supplied ammunitions and troops to support Russia's war against Ukraine. —*PTI*

Pak ISI chief is NSA amid tensions with India

ISLAMABAD, 1 MAY

Pakistan has appointed serving Pak spy agency chief Lt Gen Muhammad Asim Malik as the new National Security Advisor (NSA) amidst raging tension with India.

Lt Gen Malik, has been serving as Director General of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) since October 2024. According to a notification from Pakistan's Government, he will hold 'additional charge of the NSA with immediate effect' .He is the country's tenth NSA, but it is for the first time that a serving ISI chief has been given the task to serve concurrently in the two key positions.

The posting comes amid heightened tensions with India following the recent Pahalgam terror attack on 22 April, in which 26 people were killed.

Lt Gen Malik previously commanded the Infantry Division in Balochistan and the Infantry Brigade in Waziristan both troubled regions. He has also received a Sword of Honour in his course and served as the chief instructor at the National Defence University (NDU), as well as an instructor at the Command and Staff College Quetta.

He is a graduate of Fort Leavenworth and the Royal College of Defence Studies. He brings a wealth of experience and knowledge, having held various leadership roles in the military over the years. The NSA position had remained vacant since April 2022, when the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf government was ousted. —*PTI*

Han resigns as he eyes South Korea election bid

SEOUL, 1 MAY

South Korea's acting President Han Duck-soo announced his resignation on Thursday, stating he is stepping down to assume a 'heavier responsibility' amid strong expectations that he will run in the 3 June, presidential by-election.

Han, 75, a seasoned bureaucrat with a 40-year career and a doctorate in economics from Harvard, is seen as a likely conservative contender. He is expected to officially launch his campaign on Friday. Addressing the nation, Han said, "I have two paths ahead of me... I've decided to put down my post to do what I can to help overcome the crises facing us."

Han was appointed prime minister—the country's second-highest post—by President Yoon Suk Yeol, whose removal from office after imposing martial law last December triggered the upcoming vote. The conservative People Power Party remains divided, and observers believe Han may run with its support to challenge liberal frontrunner Lee Jae-myung.

Han previously served under both conservative and liberal governments, including as trade minister, finance minister, and ambassador to the United States. Supporters cite his economic expertise, while critics argue he lacks a popular base, is too old for the presidency, and lacks the political grit for turbulent times. —*PTI*

Harris lambasts Trump in first speech after poll loss

SAN FRANCISCO, 1 MAY

Former Vice President Kamala Harris in a high-profile speech Wednesday to sharply criticise President Donald Trump amid speculation about whether she will mount another presidential campaign or opt to run for California governor.

"Instead of an administration working to advance America's highest ideals, we are witnessing the wholesale abandonment of those ideals," Harris said a day after Trump reached 100 days in office.

Harris, mentioning Trump for the first time after defeat said she was inspired by Americans fighting the agenda of the current dispensation despite threats to their freedom or livelihood. She cautioned Americans against viewing Trump's administration as merely chaotic, casting it instead as a "high-velocity event," the culmination of extensive work on the right to remake government.

"A vessel is being used for the swift implementation of an agenda that has been decades in the making," Harris said. "An agenda to slash public education. An agenda to shrink government and then privatise its services. All while giving tax breaks to the wealthiest among us."

Harris chose a friendly audience for her return to the political arena, addressing the 20th anniversary gala for Emerge America, an organisation that recruits and trains Democratic women to run for office. A former state attorney general and US senator from California, Harris has not discouraged speculation that she might enter the race for Governor of California nor has she ruled out another run for the White House. —*PTI*

FBI agents who kneeled at BLM rally reassigned

The FBI has reassigned several agents who were photographed kneeling during the racial justice protest in Washington in 2020, two people familiar with the matter said Wednesday. The kneeling angered some in FBI but was also understood as a possible de-escalation tactic during a time of widespread protests, and the agents were not punished at the time. The move comes at a time when, FBI under Director Kash Patel has been undertaking broad personnel changes. However, the motives behind the move are not quite clear. —PTI

Sex assaults reported in US forces fell in '24

The number of sexual assaults reported across the US military dipped by nearly 4% last year, for a 2nd year in a row. Officials said there were 8,195 reported sexual assaults in 2024, compared with 8,515 in 2023. In 2022, a spike in cases triggered widespread alarm and led to new programs and an infusion of funding to combat the problem. Senior US defence officials said while the decline is a good sign, the number of reported assaults is still too high and more needs to be done to get victims to report the often undisclosed crime. —PTI

SpaceX company town to become new city

Elon Musk is close to turning a patch of coastal South Texas into "Starbase", a city centred around his SpaceX launch site. Most of the 283 eligible voters, mainly SpaceX employees, have already cast ballots and approval seems inevitable. Supporters cite economic growth and space innovation, but critics fear Musk is gaining too much control to Boca Chica Beach, a popular area. Environmental groups and locals argue this benefits a private company at the public's expense, raising concerns over accountability and access rights. —PTI

'Kids will get 2 dolls, not 30; but China suffers'

WASHINGTON, 1 MAY

President Donald Trump on Wednesday acknowledged that his tariffs could result in fewer and costlier products in the United States, saying American kids might "have two dolls instead of 30 dolls," but he insisted China will suffer more from his trade war.

His remarks followed a defensive morning after the Commerce Department reported that the US economy shrank at an annual rate of 0.3 per cent during the first quarter

The Republican president has tried to reassure a nervous country that his tariffs will not provoke a recession, after a new government report showed the US economy shrank during the first three months of the year.

Trump was quick to blame his Democratic predecessor, Joe Biden, for any setbacks while telling his Cabinet that his tariffs meant China was "having tremendous difficulty because their factories are not doing business," adding that the US did not really need imports from the world's dominant manufacturer.

"You know, somebody said, Oh, the shelves are going to be open,'" Trump continued, offering a hypothetical. "Well, maybe the children will have two dolls instead of 30 dolls. So maybe the two dolls will cost a couple bucks more than they would normally." —*PTI*

Mohsen Langarneshin **PHOTO: X**

IRAN EXECUTES SENIOR MOSSAD ASSASSIN-SPY

TEHRAN, 1 MAY

Iran has executed Mohsen Langarneshin, a 'high-ranking spy' for Israel's Mossad, who was convicted of aiding covert operations in Iran. According to the Mizan news agency, Langarneshin provided extensive logistical, technical, and operational support to Mossad from 2020 until his arrest. He was involved in the assassination of IRGC Colonel Hassan Sayyad Khodaei in May 2022, assisting in the tracking and murder of the officer in Tehran and supporting attacks on Iranian military sites, purchasing vehicles for Mossad agents, and facilitating money transfers from Israeli officers. He reportedly confessed to all charges on being apprehended. Iran has previously executed individuals linked to Mossad, particularly in cases related to attempts to undermine Iran's nuclear programme. The execution comes amidst renewed US-Iran nuclear talks, with Tehran accusing Israel of trying to sabotage the negotiations. —*PTI*

WORST IN A DECADE

Massive wildfire forces Israel to declare national emergency

JERUSALEM, 1 MAY

Israel shut down major roads, evacuated towns even as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared national emergency warning that the fires are likely to contnue for a while. Several countries sent fire-fighting aircrafts to Israel on Thursday as crews battled for a second day to extinguish the massive wildfire that broke out on a major highway linking Tel Aviv and Jerusalem around midday on 30 April, fuelled by hot, dry conditions and fanned by strong winds that quickly whipped up the flames burning through a pine forest. .

Israel's Fire and Rescue Services battled what authorites described as the a conflagration not seen in a decade. 12 people were admitted in hospitals due to smoke inhalation, while another 10 people were treated in the field.

Italy, Croatia, Spain, France and Romania were sending planes to help battle the flames, while several other countries, including North Macedonia and Cyprus, were also sending water-dropping aircraft.

Ten Israeli fire-fighting planes were operating on Thursday morning with another 8 aircrafts set to join efforts. Firefighters teams were active even as some roads were opened where large swathes of burned areas were visible from the highway. —*PTI*

An Israeli firefighter battles a wildfire near Latrun, Israel, outside of Jerusalem, Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

Palestinians search the rubble of a house damaged by Israeli strikes that killed five in Khan Younis, in southern Gaza, on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

Israeli strike in Gaza kills children

DEIR AL-BALAH, 1 MAY

Four-year-old Massa Abed took her rubber ball and doll to play with friends near her family's home in Zawaida, central Gaza. It was a quiet Sunday—calm had mostly returned after weeks of violence. But that afternoon, an Israeli strike hit a roadside tent, killing Massa and several other children.

Her 16-year-old brother rushed her lifeless body to hospital on a donkey cart. There, she was declared dead. "She had a ball in her lap and a doll in her hand," said her father, Samy Abed. "She was four. What could she do—throw a football at them?"

The Israeli army gave no comment on the strike. It is unclear why the area, near Deir al-Balah, was targeted. Israel often accuses Hamas of operating in residential areas and using civilians as shields.

Since renewed strikes began in March, over 800 children have died, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. Overall, more than 52,000 Palestinians have been killed since October 2023.

Massa's family still expects to see her at the breakfast table. "Her place is empty," said her father, holding her green ball. —*PTI*

ATF price cut by 4%, com LPG down ₹14.50

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The price of jet fuel, or Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF), was reduced by 4.4 per cent on Thursday – marking the second major cut within a month.

Additionally, the price of commercial LPG used in hotels and restaurants was lowered by Rs 14.50 per cylinder, in line with international benchmarks.

The ATF price was reduced by Rs 3,954.38 per kilolitre, or 4.4 per cent, to Rs 85,486.80 per kl in the national capital – home to one of the busiest airports in the country, according to state-owned fuel retailers.

The price cut follows a steep 6.15 per cent reduction effected on 1 April. These two reductions have effectively offset the price increases that occurred earlier this year.

The ATF price in Mumbai was cut to Rs 79,855.59 per kl from Rs 83,575.42, while those in Chennai and Kolkata were reduced to Rs 88,494.52 and Rs 88,237.05 per kl, respectively.

- The price cut follows a steep 6.15 per cent reduction on 1 April. These two reductions have offset the price increases that occurred earlier this year

Oil firms also reduced the price of commercial LPG by Rs 14.50 per 19-kg cylinder. Commercial LPG now costs Rs 1,747.50 in the national capital and Rs 1,699 in Mumbai.

The reduction follows a Rs 41 per cylinder cut in rates effected on 1 April.

International oil prices have softened in the last couple of weeks as global trade war eroded the outlook for fuel demand. Brent – the most quoted international benchmark – was trading below USD 61 per barrel - the lowest in over three years.

Prices of ATF and LPG differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes, including VAT.

The rate of cooking gas used in domestic households, however, remained unchanged at Rs 853 per 14.2-kg cylinder. *—PTI*

Markets add 2.1 cr new investors in FY26: NSE

In March 2025 only 10.6 lakh new investors were added

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

India's stock markets added 2.1 crore new investors during the financial year 2025-26, marking a strong 23.2 per cent growth in investor registrations, according to a report by the National Stock Exchange (NSE).

While the overall yearly increase was significant, the report noted that recent months have seen some moderation in new registrations. In March 2025 only 10.6 lakh new investors were added.

It said "investor base stood at 11.3 crore at the end of Mar'25 adding 2.1 crore new investors during the year...., Recent months however, have seen some moderation in investor registrations, with the Month of March seeing 10.6 lakh new investors".

The total number of client codes registered with the exchange stood at 22.1 crore as of March 2025 **PHOTO: ANI**

The total number of client codes registered with the exchange stood at 22.1 crore as of March 2025. This includes all registrations since inception, as investors can register with more than one trading member.

The report stated investor participation has grown rapidly in recent years. The number of unique investors crossed the 9-crore mark in February 2024. Just five months later, in August 2024, it touched 10 crore.

The growth continued, reaching 11 crore by January 20, 2025. This rise is being seen as a result of stronger investor protection measures, which have improved confidence in the market.

Region-wise, North India remained the leading contributor to the investor base, with 4.1 crore registered investors as of March 2025. It was followed by West India with 3.4 crore, South India with 2.3 crore, and East India with 1.4 crore investors.

North and East India recorded the highest growth in investor registrations over the last year -- rising by 26.4 per cent and 26.1 per cent respectively. South India saw a 23.1 per cent increase, while West India grew by 19.2 per cent. *—ANI*

2ND BEST SINCE ROLLOUT

GST rises 12.6% to highest-ever at ₹2.37L crore

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection rose 12.6 per cent Y-o-Y to an all-time high of about Rs 2.37 lakh crore in April, government data showed on Thursday.

The GST mop-up was Rs 2.10 lakh crore in April 2024 -- the second highest collection ever since the roll-out of the indirect tax regime on 1 July, 2017. In March 2025, the collection was Rs 1.96 lakh crore.

GST revenue from domestic transactions rose 10.7 per cent to about Rs 1.9 lakh crore, while revenue from imported goods was up 20.8 per cent to Rs 46,913 crore.

Refunds issuance rose 48.3 per cent to Rs 27,341 crore during April.

PHOTO:FREEPIK

- GST revenue from domestic transactions rose 10.7 per cent to about Rs 1.9 lakh crore, while that from imported goods was up 20.8 per cent to Rs 46,913 crore

After adjusting refunds, net GST collection rose 9.1 per cent to over Rs 2.09 lakh crore in April. *—PTI*

Adani Ports' Q4 net profit rises 50% to ₹3,023 cr

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) has announced a remarkable 50 per cent increase in its consolidated net profit for the March quarter, reaching Rs 3,023.10 crore. This surge is attributed to heightened income levels, compared to Rs 2,014.77 crore recorded in the same period of the previous fiscal year, as detailed in a regulatory filing. The company's total income climbed to Rs 8,769.63 crore, up from Rs 7,199.94 crore in the corresponding quarter last year. However, expenses rose to 5,382.13 crore during this period, compared to Rs 4,450.52 crore in the final quarter of FY24. For the fiscal year 2025, APSEZ reported a net profit of Rs 11,061.26 crore, significantly higher than the Rs 8,103.99 crore achieved in FY24, showcasing the company's robust growth trajectory and financial health. *—PTI*

PHOTO:X

Tata Motors Ltd's total sales figure down 6% in April

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Tata Motors Ltd has announced a 6.1 per cent drop in overall sales for April 2025, with total units sold reaching 72,753 compared to 77,521 in April 2024. In a regulatory filing, the company revealed that domestic sales fell by 7 per cent to 70,963 units, down from 76,399 units in the same month last year. Passenger vehicle (PV) sales, which include electric vehicles (EVs), also experienced a decline of 5 per cent, totalling 45,532 units compared to 47,983 units in April 2024. Domestic sales of PVs, inclusive of EVs, were down by 6 per cent at 45,199 units against 47,883 units in April 2024. Meanwhile, total commercial vehicle (CV) sales decreased by 8 per cent, with 27,221 units sold, down from 29,538 units during the same period last year. *—PTI*

GST department issues Britannia ₹25-cr tax order

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Britannia Industries Ltd on Thursday said it has received an order from the GST authority demanding over Rs 25 crore pertaining to classification of a product sold by it and input tax credit in respect of certain goods. In a regulatory filing, the company said the Additional Commissioner of CGST & CX, Kolkata North, has passed an order covering tax periods from July 2017 to March 2023. The order has been passed pursuant to a show cause notice issued by the Directorate General of GST Intelligence dated August 3, 2024, pertaining to classification of a certain product sold by the company and input tax credit in respect of certain goods, it added. *—PTI*

JSW, UPPCL sign pact for hydro energy storage

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

JSW Energy on Thursday said its subsidiary JSW Neo Energy Ltd has signed an agreement with Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Ltd for the procurement of pumped hydro energy storage. The PHSPPA is for the supply of energy storage capacity for a period of 40 years where the company will be entitled to receive a fixed capacity charge of Rs 77.2 lakh per MW per annum. The project, located in Sonbhadra district, Uttar Pradesh, will be capable of a scheduled discharge of 8 hours (with maximum continuous 6 hours) per day. The project is expected to be commissioned in the next 6 years. Subsequent to this, the company's total locked-in energy storage capacity now stands at 28.3 GWh, which includes 26.4 GWh of PSP. *—PTI*

RBI raises ATM usage fee to ₹23

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The RBI's instructions on revised ATM usage cost have come into effect from Thursday, under which banks can charge Rs 23 per cash withdrawal once a customer exhausts the free permissible limit in a month. Earlier, banks were allowed to charge up to Rs 21 per such transaction.

Customers are eligible for five free transactions every month from their own bank's ATMs. They are also eligible for free transactions from other bank ATMs – three in metro centres and five in non-metro centres.

On 28 March, the RBI issued a circular, saying, "Beyond the free transactions, a customer may be charged a maximum fee of Rs 23 per transaction. This shall be effective from 1 May, 2025," the RBI's circular said.

The revised instructions also apply to transactions done at cash recycler machines (other than for cash deposit transactions).The RBI has, from time to time, issued various instructions on the number of free ATM transactions and maximum charges that can be levied on a customer beyond the mandatory free transactions. Instructions have also been issued by the RBI on interchange fee structure for ATM transactions.

PHOTO:CHATGPT

The circular also said the ATM interchange fee will be as decided by the ATM network.

The current interchange fee per transaction is Rs 17 for financial transactions and Rs 6 for non-financial transactions in all centres. There were 2,55,885 banks ATMs, cash recycler machines (CRMs) and white label ATMs (WLAs) at end-March 2025. *—PTI*

Oman eyes Indian tourists to boost sector

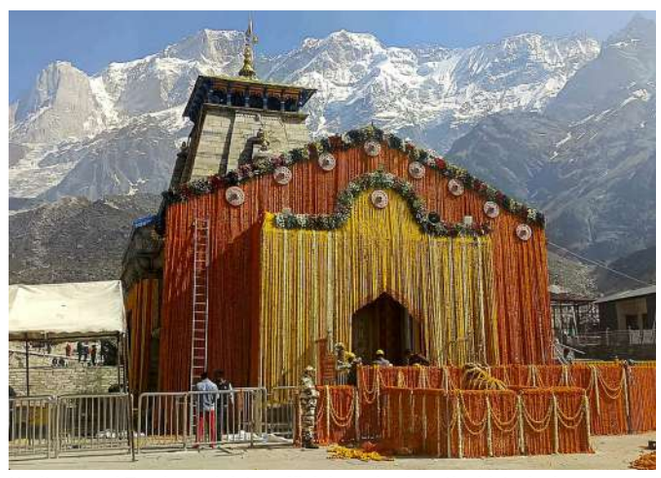
MUSCAT, 1 MAY

Oman is enhancing its strategies to draw tourists, notably from India, aiming for approximately 11.7 million visitors annually by 2040 as part of its sustainable tourism initiative, said Mohamed bin Mahmoud al Zadjali, an adviser to the Minister of Heritage and Tourism.

Zadjali emphasised the historical connections between Oman and India, identifying Indian tourists as a crucial demographic. "We rely heavily on Indian travellers, who consistently explore various regions in Oman," he stated.

In 2023, Oman welcomed around 600,000 Indian tourists, representing about 15 per cent of total arrivals. Overall, the country attracted 4 million visitors in 2023, a notable 38 per cent increase compared to the previous year.

Oman is targeting the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions sector and promoting corporate travel and destination weddings to cultivate a loyal client base in India. Furthermore, the ministry is working towards its goal of 6 million international tourists by 2030, capitalising on India's growing outbound tourism market. Zadjali also highlighted the Oman Botanic Garden, a key project dedicated to preserving the nation's unique plant species as part of the broader vision for sustainable tourism. *—PTI*



Heritage and Tourism ministry official emphasises the historical connections between Oman and India **PHOTO: PTI**

Cognizant Q1 revenue up 7.4%

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

US-based IT major Cognizant, which has a substantial chunk of employees in India, has reported 7.45 per cent year-on-year growth in revenue to USD 5.1 billion for March quarter of 2025. It had earned a revenue of USD 4.7 billion in Q1 2024.

Cognizant follows January–December financial year.

The company has raised its full-year growth guidance to 3.9-6.4 per cent, from 2.6-5.1 per cent earlier. It now expects a full-year (2025) revenue between USD 20.5-21 billion.

Cognizant CEO Ravi Kumar S said the firm has started the year on a strong note, delivering revenue and adjusted operating margin ahead of expectations.

"The breadth and depth of our portfolio, combined with our deep industry and domain expertise, position us well as a strategic partner for clients in an increasingly complex macroeconomic environment.

"Today, productivity, cost reduction and resiliency are especially important, and we believe our differentiated AI and platform capabilities are helping clients navigate the near-term uncertainty while embarking on longer-term AI-led transformation," he said in a statement. *—PTI*

Sebi rules out aptitude test for retailers

MUMBAI, 1 MAY

Markets regulator Sebi's chief Tuhin Kanta Pandey has ruled out the possibility of an aptitude test for retail traders wanting to participate in the Futures & Options (F&O) segment, saying that it is impractical and prone to regulatory overreach.

The Sebi had earlier introduced measures in November last year in a bid to curb excess speculation in derivatives. These regulatory steps came in the wake of a Sebi study that revealed a staggering 9 out of 10 retail investors lose money while trading in F&O instruments.

When asked about the industry's suggestion of introducing tests for retail investors before permitting them to trade in risky derivative products, Pandey clarified the regulator's stance. "Right now, we aren't really considering any of those things."

He explained the concerns of practicality and effectiveness behind such proposals. "Number one, we have to also see, will it be a regulatory overreach? Will you be able to effectively do it? he said.

Sebi, he clarified, already has certification mechanisms for specific market participants. "For those who are registered with the system, we do have this," he said. *—PTI*

Arvind Shrivastava assumes charge as revenue secretary

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Arvind Shrivastava on Thursday took charge as Revenue Secretary in the Finance Ministry.

A 1994-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the Karnataka cadre, Shrivastava served as Joint Secretary and then Additional Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office.

Before that, Shrivastava served as Joint Secretary in the Budget Division of the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance; Development Officer at the Asian Development Bank; Secretary, Finance Department, Bengaluru; Secretary, Urban Development Department, Bengaluru; and Managing Director of the Urban Infrastructure Development & Finance Corporation, Karnataka.

PHOTO:X

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet had on April 18, 2025, appointed Shrivastava as the Secretary, Revenue Department. *—PTI*

GOVT UNIFIES REGIONAL RURAL BANKS TO ENHANCE FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The Finance Ministry announced today the implementation of the 'One State One RRB' initiative, effective from 1 May. This reform sees the amalgamation of 26 Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) across 11 states and Union Territories into standalone RRBs, successfully reducing the total number from 43 to 28. With more than 22,000 branches across 700 districts, the new structure aims to improve the viability and financial performance of these banks.

The Department of Financial Services (DFS) stated that the consolidation would enhance the capital base of these unified RRBs, promoting credit growth and diversification in line with the specific goals of each state. Each entity will operate with an authorised capital of Rs 2,000 crore, providing a stronger foundation for future financial initiatives and better serving local communities across the country. *—PTI*

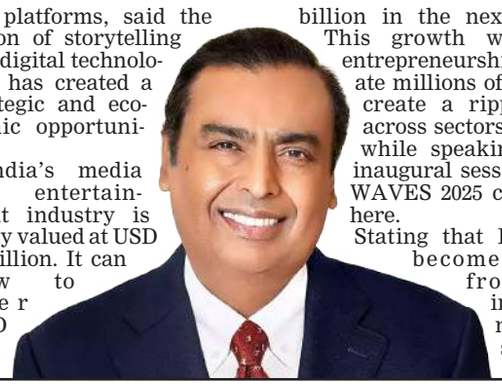
RIPPLE EFFECT ACROSS SECTORS

Media & entertainment industry to reach $100B: Ambani

MUMBAI, 1 MAY

India's versatile media and entertainment industry can grow more than three-fold to USD 100 billion in the next decade, creating millions of jobs and a ripple effect across sectors, billionaire Mukesh Ambani said on Thursday.

Ambani, whose group controls Network18 – one of India's largest media conglomerates – as well as digital platforms, entertainment channels and content streaming platforms, said the fusion of storytelling and digital technologies has created a strategic and economic opportunity.



"India's media and entertainment industry is today valued at USD 28 billion. It can grow to over USD 100 billion in the next decade. This growth will drive entrepreneurship, generate millions of jobs, and create a ripple effect across sectors," he said while speaking at the inaugural session of the WAVES 2025 conference here.

Stating that India has become a front-ranking digital nation, he said the fusion of storytelling and digital technologies is unique to India.

- Billionaire Mukesh Ambani said the fusion of storytelling and digital technologies has created a strategic and economic opportunity

"It has multiplied the impact and reach of entertainment and cultural experiences beyond imagination. The tools of AI and immersive technologies can make our stories more captivating than ever before — and take them instantly to audiences across languages, countries, and cultures."

By mastering these tools, India's super-talented young creators will rule the global entertainment industry with blockbusters, Ambani noted. India's entertainment and cultural industry is not just soft power – it is real power. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

PBKS captain fined ₹12L for slow over-rate

CHENNAI, 1 MAY

Punjab Kings' captain Shreyas Iyer has been fined Rs 12 lakh for maintaining a slow over-rate during his side's recent victory over Chennai Super Kings in the Indian Premier League. This fine comes as a result of his team's first offence of the season, in accordance with Article 2.22 of the IPL Code of Conduct concerning minimum over-rate violations.

The IPL media advisory announced the fine on Thursday. In the match, Iyer and Prabhsimran Singh both scored half-centuries, while Yuzvendra Chahal claimed a hat-trick, leading the Punjab Kings to a four-wicket win. The victory eliminated the five-time champions CSK from contention for the play-off spots. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

MI's Vignesh Puthur out of remainder of IPL

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Five-time IPL champions Mumbai Indians announced the signing of leg-spinner Raghu Sharma as a replacement for injured Vignesh Puthur for the remainder of the ongoing season. Puthur, a left-arm spinner from Kerala, has been sidelined due to bone stress reactions in both shins. Sharma, who was previously part of MI's support bowling unit, will now join the main squad.

The right-arm leg-break bowler has an impressive record, having taken 57 wickets in 11 first-class matches and several wickets in List A and T20 formats. Although Puthur made a promising impact with six wickets in his maiden IPL season, including a debut match against CSK, he will continue his recovery under the Mumbai Indians' medical staff. *—PTI*

Indian lifters fetch 2 bronze at Youth World C'ships

LIME, 1 MAY

India kicked off its campaign at the IWF Youth and Junior World Weightlifting Championships in Lima, Peru, securing two bronze medals on the opening day. Jyoshna Sabar earned a bronze in the youth girls' 40kg category, lifting a total of 129kg (56kg in snatch and 72kg in clean and jerk), also clinching a silver in the clean and jerk segment. Harsabardhan Sahu contributed to the medal tally by lifting a total of 197kg in the youth boys' 49kg category, which included 87kg in the snatch and 110kg in clean and jerk. He finished third overall, earning another bronze for his clean and jerk performance. At this championship, medals are awarded separately for snatch, clean and jerk, and total lift, a format distinct from that of the Olympic Games. *—PTI*

GT eye quick rebound post Suryavanshi blitz

SRH need victory to stay afloat in IPL playoff race

AHMEDABAD, 1 MAY

Gujarat Titans will look to bounce back from the carnage that wonder boy Vaibhav Suryavanshi inflicted on them when they face a stuttering Sunrisers Hyderabad in an IPL match here on Friday.

GT were left stunned when Rajasthan Royals' Suryavanshi took the game by storm, smashing the fastest century of the season in just 35 balls and becoming the youngest ever to score an IPL ton at just 14 years and 32 days.

The eight-wicket defeat was crushing despite GT posting a formidable 209/4 but, overall, the result has not changed their position in this IPL.

Gujarat Titans celebrate the wicket of Kolkata Knight Riders' Venkatesh Iyer at Eden Gardens in Kolkata on Monday. PHOTO: ANI

The Titans are still one of the most consistent teams this season, having a well-balanced squad with depth in both batting and bowling.

The Shubman Gill-led side is currently placed comfortably with six wins from nine matches (12 points), and it needs just two victories from their remaining five fixtures to reach the magical 16-point mark – good enough to secure the qualification for playoffs.

Back home, GT will be buoyed by their in-form top-order. Sai Sudharsan, who continues to hold the Orange Cap with 456 runs including five 50s, has been their standout performer. Gill (389) and Jos Buttler (406) also feature among the season's top-7 run-getters, forming a formidable trio at the top despite recent hiccups.

On the bowling front, Prasidh Krishna has led the attack impressively, forming a strong pace trio alongside Mohammed Siraj and Ishant Sharma.

In the spin department, Rashid Khan's return to form – especially his 2/25 against Kolkata Knight Riders – is a major boost, while Washington Sundar has been a steady support option.

In the reverse fixture earlier this season, GT had registered a commanding seven-wicket win over SRH in Hyderabad, built around Mohammed Siraj's sensational spell of 4/17.

A month later, they'll be hoping for an encore. *—PTI*

PBKS' MAXWELL OUT OF IPL DUE TO INJURY

CHENNAI, 1 MAY

Punjab Kings' Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell was on Thursday ruled out of the IPL's remaining matches after fracturing his finger. He suffered the injury before Kings rained out game against Kolkata Knight Riders, in which he was dismissed for 7.

"Maxwell has been ruled out of the remainder of the season due to a finger injury. We wish him a speedy recovery," Kings posted on their social media handle. He was replaced by Suryansh Shedge in Wednesday night's clash against Chennai Super Kings.

"Unfortunately, Maxi's broken his finger just before the last game at training. He didn't think it was too bad, but it ended up getting pretty bad. He had scans and the results weren't great. So unfortunately for Maxi, I think it's likely he's out for the tournament," Maxwell's compatriot and PBKS teammate Marcus Stoinis told Jiostar ahead of the CSK game. *—PTI*

Indian boxers add 4 golds, finish second in Asian title

AMMAN, 1 MAY

Indian boxers wrapped up their campaign at the inaugural Asian U-15 & U-17 Championships in style, adding four gold medals on the final day to finish second overall.

India's tally included 15 gold, 6 silver and 22 bronze medals, placing them behind table-toppers Kazakhstan. Uzbekistan finished third.

The final day of the tournament saw the Indian U-17 contingent bag four more gold medals – all from the girls' division.

Khushi Chand (46kg) edged past Mongolia's Altanzul Altangadas in a hard-fought 3:2 win, while Ahaana Sharma (50 kg) and Jannat (54kg) delivered dominant 5:0 victories over opponents from Uzbekistan.

The final gold came through Anshika (80+kg), who ended her bout against Jordan's Jana Alalawneh with a first-round RSC to seal India's 15th title of the championships.

"A proud and satisfying performance by our young boxers at the continental stage! These young boxers are the future of Indian boxing. With this foundation, I have no doubt we'll see many of them on the Olympic stage in the years to come," Indian Boxing's Interim Committee Chairman Ajay Singh said.

India's U-17 squad after the final day of the Asian U-15 and U-17 Championships PHOTO: X/@BFI_official

In the boys' U-17 section, Devansh (80kg) settled for silver after a 0:5 loss to Kazakhstan's Mukhamedali Rustembek.

The Indian U-17 boy's team concluded the tournament with one silver and six bronze medals.

Simranjeet Kaur (60kg) and Harsika (63kg) added two more silvers to the tally, as the Indian U-17 girls finished with four gold, two silver, and five bronze medals. *—PTI*

Praggnanandhaa stands 3rd in SRB

WARSAW, 1 MAY

Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa finished third while Slovenia's Vladimir Fedoseev expectedly won the Superbet Rapid and Blitz (SRB) tournament, an event on the Grand Chess tour.

Aravindh Chithambaram did not see any change in his fortunes in the blitz section and had to be content with a tie for seventh place in his maiden outing in the GCT.

Fedoseev, who enjoyed a massive 3.5 points lead coming in to the final day, seemed unstoppable in the blitz section yet again scoring a massive 7.5/9 as he pocketed the winner's purse of USD 40,000. His overall score was 26.5 points out of a possible 36 in the event that offered two points for a win in rapid and one in blitz. *—PTI*

India blocks Arshad Nadeem's Insta account

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Pakistan's Olympic gold-winning javelin thrower Arshad Nadeem's Instagram account has been blocked in India owing to a "legal request" in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack.

Users attempting to access Nadeem's Instagram page from India are met with the message: "Account not available in India. This is because we complied with a legal request."

Following the 22 April Pahalgam terror attack, the Indian government has cracked down on Pakistani social media accounts that have large following in India.

Earlier this week, several Pakistani YouTube channels were restricted in India for "disseminating provocative and communally sensitive content, false and misleading narratives and misinformation against India, its Army and security agencies".

Former cricketers Shoaib Akhtar, Basit Ali, and Shahid Afridi were among those whose YouTube accounts were withheld. Interestingly, while their YouTube content is no longer accessible, their Instagram accounts remain available, unlike Nadeem's.

The Instagram accounts of current Pakistan cricketers including Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan and Shaheed Afridi are also accessible.

Other prominent Pakistani celebrities, including actors Mahira Khan and Ali Zafar, have also seen their Instagram accounts blocked in India.

Nadeem, who won gold at the Paris Olympics after upstaging Indian superstar Neeraj Chopra, had been invited by the latter to participate in the inaugural NC Classic javelin event scheduled for May 24 in Bengaluru. However, he declined the invitation, citing prior commitments. *—PTI*

Barcelona, Milan draw 3–3 in Champions League semifinals

BARCELONA, 1 MAY

Barcelona and Inter Milan played out an exhilarating 3-3 draw in their Champions League semifinal first leg on Wednesday, setting the stage for a compelling return match in Milan next week. Among the standout moments were Lamine Yamal's brilliant curling effort that hit the post, Marcus Thuram's cheeky back-heeled goal, and Raphinha's thunderous strike that deflected in off the bar and goalkeeper Yann Sommer.

The clash saw both teams showcase their attacking prowess, despite Inter's reputation for a staunch defence. Opta Stats noted this was the highest score for a draw in a Champions League semifinal since 1999.

The semi-final first leg clash on Wednesday saw Barcelona and Inter Milan showcase their attacking prowess PHOTO: X

Both teams remain determined; Barcelona aims for its first final since 2015, while Inter seeks a return after losing to Manchester City in the 2023 final. The aggregate winner will face either Paris Saint-Germain or Arsenal in Munich later this month. *—PTI*

Lord's to host Women's T20 WC final in 2026

DUBAI, 1 MAY

In a significant announcement, the International Cricket Council (ICC) revealed that the prestigious Lord's Cricket Ground will be the venue for the final of the expanded Women's T20 World Cup on 5 July, 2026. The tournament, featuring 12 teams, is set to kick off on 12 June and will comprise 33 matches held across seven iconic venues, including Old Trafford, Headingley, Edgbaston, The Oval, Hampshire Bowl, and Bristol County Ground.

Eight teams—Australia, England, India, New Zealand, South Africa, and West Indies—have already secured their spots, with four additional teams to qualify through the ICC Women's T20 World Cup Qualifier in 2025.

ICC Chairman Jay Shah expressed excitement about the event, noting the UK's passionate support for women's cricket and calling the 2017 Women's ODI World Cup final at Lord's a landmark moment.

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

The tournament promises to showcase thrilling T20 action and continue the upward trend of women's cricket, both in attendance and viewership, ahead of its Olympic inclusion in Los Angeles 2028. *—PTI*

Ronaldo's Al-Nassr faces defeat in ACL

JEDDAH, 1 MAY

Cristiano Ronaldo's pursuit of a major trophy in Saudi Arabia remains elusive after Al-Nassr succumbed to a 3-2 defeat against Kawasaki Frontale in the Asian Champions League (ACL) semifinals on Wednesday.

The 40-year-old forward, who joined the Riyadh club in December 2022, had multiple opportunities to score but could not find the net against the Japanese side. Kawasaki will now face fellow Saudi team Al-Ahli in Saturday's final, with both clubs seeking their first continental title.

Kawasaki took the lead just 10 minutes into the match with a stunning volley from Tatsuya Ito. Al-Nassr's former Liverpool star Sadio Mane levelled the score before the half-hour mark. Ronaldo came close to scoring with a powerful header that struck the woodwork, but it was Kawasaki that regained their advantage just before half-time through Yuto Ozeki.

Despite maintaining pressure, Al-Nassr fell further behind in the 76th minute when Akihiro Ienaga scored from close range. In the quarters, Ronaldo had scored in Al-Nassr's convincing win over Yokohama. *—PTI*

STATUS ROW

Pickleball lands in administrative tug of war in India

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

As pickleball begins to carve out its niche in India, it is facing an administrative conflict following the Sports Ministry's decision to grant national federation status to the newly established Indian Pickleball Association (IPA). This move has prompted the older All India Pickleball Association (AIPA) to object and threaten legal action.

The recognition of the IPA was granted on 25 April, enabling it to receive financial support while managing the sport's promotion and development across the country. A sports ministry official confirmed the IPA's status was awarded after a recent appeal from the organisation.

Originating from the USA, pickleball combines elements of tennis, table tennis, and badminton, played in singles or doubles on a court similar to a doubles badminton court, though with a slightly lower net. IPA President Suryaveer Singh Bhullar described the recognition as a "defining moment," focusing on cultivating talent and expanding accessibility to the sport.

In contrast, the AIPA, which claims to have introduced and nurtured pickleball in India since 2007-08, voiced its discontent with the Ministry's decision. President Arvind Prabhoo raised concerns about the fairness and transparency of the process, citing the 2011 National Sports Code's stipulation that a national sports body must have existed for at least three years before recognition.

The recognition of the IPA was granted on 25 April PHOTO: PTI

AIPA Treasurer Nikhil Mathare indicated potential legal action may follow, while continuing discussions with the ministry are also on the horizon. The disagreements echo the global governance struggles of pickleball, which involves multiple entities claiming to oversee the sport internationally. *—PTI*